THE STORY OF THE BRETHREN MOVEMENT

BY

T. S. VEITCH

THE PRACTICE OF SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES

:: DURING THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS ::

To: Bruce

From: - Ja M. Mabbott.

THE STORY
OF
THE BRETHREN MOVEMENT

A SIMPLE AND STRAIGHTFORWARD
ACCOUNT OF THE FEATURES AND
FAILURES OF A SINCERE
ATTEMPT TO CARRY OUT
THE PRINCIPLES OF
SCRIPTURE DURING
THE LAST 100
YEARS

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Foreword

THE troubles that arise among the churches of the saints come never from obedience to the Truth, always from departure from it.

The principles upon which the Christians known as "brethren" met at first *are such as do not permit of division or strife*, for where the Spirit of the Lord is there is *liberty*, and the very first fruit of the Spirit is *love, joy, and peace*.

In order to sectarianism or strife, one, or some, must be unspiritual, seeking in self-will to restrict the liberty of the churches or by pride causing contention: insisting on their own views as if they were Scripture, or in love of pre-eminence desiring to impose their own will on others. Where, however, true spirituality is maintained, not only are these things avoided, but the Assembly is generally healthy enough to put out evil men who come in unawares, and to resist the attacks of wolves in sheep's clothing.

I have moved much among the Assemblies for 37 years, and gladly bear testimony to the following facts:

I. **The Assemblies known as "Open" are singularly free from divisions**. The Exclusive divisions have gained an evil repute for brethren as a whole, from which the Open have in some measure suffered—many not knowing the vital distinction between the principles of the one and those of the other; but compared with other companies of believers, they have much to praise God for in this matter.

II. **The Scriptural principles for which the first brethren stood are still carried out amongst us,** each Assembly recognising its own responsibility to the Lord alone, and according to all other Assemblies the same liberty.

III. **They gladly welcome to the Lord's Table all whom the Lord has received,** including those "brethren beloved and longed for" who do not show them the same grace.

IV. **The Zeal in the Gospel and in Missionary Work** tends to deepen and increase among them, for which they praise God and pray for a continuance of the pure Word of God amongst them.

V. **That Newtonian doctrine (so-called) or other heresies are rife among the meetings is untrue in fact.** Whenever attention has been called to false teaching it has been dealt with in a Scriptural manner generally and without division or strife.

The following pages are written kindly, and manifest the spirit of grace and truth, so desirable in handling such matters. The aim is not to attach blame, but to tell the truth, that those who desire information and help in the confusion of Exclusivism may find it and act before the Lord.

GEORGE GOODMAN.

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Introductory

A RETROSPECT of one hundred years of the history of the Scriptural Assemblies of Christians known as "Brethren" is both interesting and instructive. It reveals the plain path which the Spirit of God marked out for the feet of the Saints, and which at the first they joyously and eagerly trod. It also shows the pitfalls into which many of the Saints, by leaving the pathway, stumbled with disastrous results. The lapse of the years gives a true perspective in which to judge these things.

The facts narrated in these pages are stated with the desire that in the days to come these pitfalls may be avoided, and the old paths adhered to or resought and trodden by the People of God. The Scriptural truths which were rediscovered and became living and powerful to the Saints of God one hundred years ago are as much the Truth of God now as then, and are as much needed now as then.

In the pages that follow, the writer has endeavoured to trace clearly the history during the past hundred years of what is known as the "Brethren Movement," showing the lines

along which the Spirit of God moved, and the human instruments He used. Since the facts connected with the various sad and regrettable dissensions and divisions which have taken place cannot be ignored, they have been shortly stated, so that the reader may have a clear understanding of what took place. But the pages have not been burdened nor the reader wearied with long extracts from the numerous pamphlets, "narratives of facts," or "letters" which were issued at the time of heated controversy.

In connection with the study of the subject, numerous books and pamphlets were consulted, and in particular the writer is indebted for information obtained from "Darbyism," by Henry Groves (the son of Anthony Norris Groves, the pioneer missionary of Brethren); "The Brethren: Their Origin, Progress, and Testimony," by Andrew Miller; "John Nelson Darby," a Biography by W. G. Turner; "The Life of George Muller," by William Henry Harding; "The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby," edited by Wm. Kelly; "A History of Plymouth Brethren," by William Blair Neatby (a son of Dr. Thomas Neatby, one of the early and highly esteemed teachers among Brethren); "The Principles of Open Brethren," by Dr. A. Rendle Short; "The Brethren

Movement," by H. A. Ironside (a series of articles which appeared in an American magazine entitled "Serving and Waiting"); "The Pilgrim Church," by E. H. Broadbent; and "Chief Men among the Brethren," by Hy. Pickering, Editor of "The Witness."

Not having any personal connection with any of the disputes named herein, the writer has endeavoured to give an impartial narrative, as seen at a distance from the events, but as this record is purely a personal work, it must be understood that he alone is responsible for the statements and opinions expressed herein. He expresses the hope that this long-distance view may prove of service to all his "brethren" (whom he loves in the Truth), and above all be to the glory of God the Father, to Whom be glory in the Church for evermore.

T. S. V.

THE STORY OF THE

Brethren Movement

A CENTURY'S ATTEMPT TO FOLLOW THE SCRIPTURE

Chapter I

Early Beginnings

THE early years of the nineteenth century were in many ways similar to the early years of this century. Napoleon's ambition had kindled throughout Europe a devastating warfare, which, like the Great European War, resulted in grave political and social upheavals. The French Revolution, like the Soviet regime in Russia, was a revolt not only against kings and constituted authority, but also against God and religion. The Christian religion was abolished. Across the gateways of the French cemeteries were inscribed the words, "Here is eternal sleep." The Day of Rest was changed from every seventh day to every tenth. In the Notre Dame Cathedral a painted female from the Opera was worshipped as the Goddess of Reason.

Britain was greatly affected. There were fears of invasion, rumours of war, famine, and pestilence. Men's hearts were failing them because of fear. The study of the Holy Scriptures was stimulated, and the spiritual life of the people was deeply stirred. The closing years of the eighteenth century saw the starting by ROBERT RAIKES, of Gloucester, of the first Sunday School. The same years also witnessed the founding of the "London Missionary Society" in 1795, the "Church Missionary Society" and the "Religious Tract Society" in 1799; and the "British and Foreign Bible Society" a few years later. These various movements were clear manifestations of the mighty working of the Holy Spirit at that time.

The Setting of the Movement.

Another manifestation of the Spirit's working, a few years later, was certainly in what has become known as "THE BRETHREN MOVEMENT."

Just as God used in the sixteenth century MARTIN LUTHER, a Roman Catholic monk, to restore to the Church the forgotten truth of justification by faith alone, so God used a converted Roman Catholic doctor to restore to His People forgotten truths concerning His Church and its Scriptural fellowship and worship.

When MARTIN LUTHER nailed his ninety-five Theses to the door of the church at Wittenburg on 31st October, 1517, the sound of his hammer reverberated throughout Europe. Less dramatic, but none the less widespread, was the influence of Dr. CRONIN, a young converted Roman Catholic.

EDWARD CRONIN was born in Cork in 1801, his father being a Roman Catholic and his mother a Protestant. He was brought up as a Roman Catholic, but was graciously led into life and liberty by the Spirit of God. A dental student at first, he afterwards qualified as a doctor. While visiting Dublin he was welcomed in the various Evangelical Churches as one who had been delivered from Rome. He rejoiced in the fellowship of the Christians in the different denominations, but grieved over the divisions which rent the Protestant Church. When, however, he came to reside in Dublin he was told he must attach himself to a particular denomination and congregation and *abide there*. Under pressure he attached himself to the Independent Chapel, York Street, Dublin, the clergyman being the (Rev.) W. Cooper. His whole being chafed at the restrictions which the "special membership" imposed on him. His love to all the Saints overflowed the sectarian barriers. His study

of the Word of God confirmed him in his belief that the Body of Christ was one, in spite of man-made barriers. His study of the Scriptures also showed the unscripturalness of the one-man ministry.

Loosed from the Old Connection.

Writing of the experience he was passing through in these days, he says: "This affected me to such an extent that it was a season of deep exercise of heart and separation from many that I loved in the Lord, and, to avoid the appearance of evil, I spent many a Lord's Day morning under a tree or a hay-stack during the time of their service. My name having been publicly denounced from one of their pulpits (the (Rev.) W. Cooper's), one of their deacons, Edward Wilson (Assistant Secretary to the Bible Society) was constrained to protest against this step, which led ultimately to his leaving also. Thus separated, we two met for breaking of bread and prayer in one of his rooms until his departure for England."

Thus in the year 1825 there was a humble return to Scriptural simplicity and liberty in worship. Apparently before Mr. Wilson left for England, the number had been augmented by the addition of Dr. Cronin's two

cousins, the Misses DRURY, who had also left York Street Chapel, and Mr. TIMMS, a bookseller. When Mr. Wilson's room was no longer available, the meeting was held in Dr. Cronin's house in Lower Pembroke Street, where, within the next two years, the numbers continued to increase. Here they were joined by FRANCIS HUTCHISON, who offered the use of a larger room in his house at No. 9 Fitzwilliam Square, and to this place the meeting was removed. About this time also appeared

The First Hired Hall.

JOHN VESEY PARNELL (afterwards second Lord Congleton) became associated with the little company of Believers. It was on his suggestion that the place of meeting was transferred to a large hired room in Aungier Street, belonging to an auctioneer, "the purpose being to let the Lord's Table in the midst of us become more of 'a witness.'" "Ye *proclaim* the Lord's death" (1 Cor. 11. 26, R.V.). Up to this point the meeting-places had been in a private house—"the Church in thy house" (Philemon 2). Now for the first time the meeting-place of those who became known as "Brethren" is a public hired room.

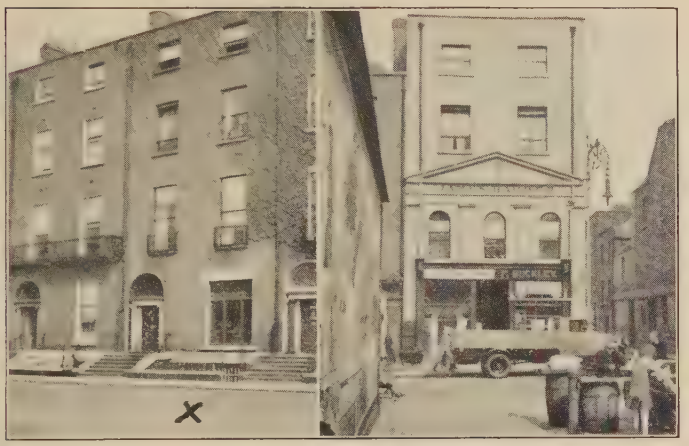
Dr. CRONIN, writing of these blissful and happy days, says: "We soon began to feel, as

humble brethren were added to us, that the house was unsuited, which led us to take a large auction room in Aungier Street for our use on Sundays, and oh, the blessed seasons with my soul with JOHN PARNELL, WILLIAM STOKES, and others, while moving the furniture aside, and laying the simple table with the bread and the wine on Saturday evening—seasons of joy never to be forgotten, for surely we had the Master's smile and sanction in the testimony of such a movement as this was."

The Sunshine of His Presence.

The little company of Christians—humble and obscure from the world's standpoint—had a gracious realisation of the Lord's presence in their midst, combined with the Holy Spirit's comfort. They were clearly established along two particular lines of truth. *First*, as to the oneness of the Church which is the Body of Christ; and *Second*, as to the absence of a clerical caste in the New Testament Scriptures, and the unscriptural character of the man-ordained ministry. They believed that all true Believers were members of the One Body, and they welcomed warmly all such who came to them, irrespective of denominational distinctions. Thus they were completely delivered from sectarianism. They

MEETING PLACES IN DUBLIN



THE FIRST MEETING PLACE,
X No. 9 Fitzwilliam Square.
(Page 15).

THE SECOND MEETING PLACE,
No. 11 Aungier Street.
(Page 15).

PRESENT MEETING PLACE,
Merrion Hall, Lower Merrion Square.

o face page 16

FOUR EARLIEST BRETHREN

Dr. Edward Cronin. (Page 13).

Lord Congleton. (Page 15).

A. N. Groves. (Page 25).

Wm. James Stokes. (Page 16).

gloried in the fact that in the Lord Jesus Christ they had a Great High Priest, "an High Priest over the House of God" (Heb. 10. 21). They realised that the priesthood of all true believers gave them liberty to enter the Holiest. The believed that the Ascended Lord had given gifts to the Church "for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the Body of Christ" (Eph. 4 .12). Thus were they effectively set free from the twin evil of clerisy.

Writing of these early days, HENRY GROVES says: "These principles gave to the Church a membership open to all who are in Christ, and not otherwise excluded by His express command, and a ministry open to all duly qualified, and owned by the Holy Spirit, and from which all others are excluded."

The truth regarding the Lord's Return did not in these very early days occupy so large a space in their teaching as it did later. It, however, very soon began to occupy the prominent place which it has retained ever since.

John Nelson Darby Joins the Company.

In 1827, while the little Company was still meeting in Fitzwilliam Square, they received two notable additions in JOHN GIFFORD BELLETT and JOHN NELSON DARBY.

J. G. BELLETT was born in Dublin in 1795, of an Anglo-Irish family. Converted to God while yet in his 'teens, he devoted himself to Christian work. He was called to the Irish Bar in 1822, but apparently did not practise much, if at all. While bound by many strong family ties to the Church of Ireland, he, probably through FRANCIS HUTCHISON, was brought into touch with the meeting in Fitzwilliam Square. Mr. Bellett was deeply spiritual, and the simple fellowship on Scriptural lines appealed to him. In definitely associating himself with the Assembly in Fitzwilliam Square, he appears to have been much influenced by conversations he had with ANTHONY NORRIS GROVES (father of Henry Groves).

Miss BESSY PAGET, a lady well known among early "Brethren," states that Mr. Bellett in the spring of 1827 made this statement to her: "Groves has just been telling me that it appeared to him from the Scripture that believers meeting together as disciples of Christ were free to break bread together as their Lord had admonished them, and that, in so far as the practice of the apostles could be a guide, every Lord's Day should be set apart for thus remembering the Lord's death and obeying His parting command."

The Original Thought of Gathering.

Again, when at the close of 1828, A. N. Groves paid another visit to Dublin before leaving for Bagdad, Mr. Bellett tells thus of a further conversation he had with him: "Walking one day with him (*i.e.*, Mr. Groves), as we were passing down Lower Pembroke Street, he said to me, 'This I doubt not is the mind of the Lord concerning us: *We should come together in all simplicity as disciples, not waiting on any pulpit or ministry, but trusting that the Lord would edify us together, by ministering as He pleased, and saw good from the midst of ourselves.*' At the moment he spoke these words I was assured my soul had got the right idea; and that moment I remember as if it were but yesterday, and could point you out the place. That was the birthday of my mind, may I so speak, as a brother."

Mr. Bellett's lifelong association with "Brethren" was marked by Christian tenderness and love, which he maintained in the midst of controversy and discord. He was the author of several volumes, and, of the outstanding teachers among the Brethren, he has been described as one of the most spiritual.

The Record of John Nelson Darby.

JOHN NELSON DARBY was the youngest son of JOHN DARBY, of Leap Castle, King's County, Ireland, and was born in London in 1800. He was educated at Westminster School, and afterwards at Trinity College, Dublin, where he graduated in 1819 as Classical Gold Medallist. He, like Mr. Bellett, was also called to the Irish Bar, but soon abandoned that profession. He was ordained by Archbishop MAGEE to a curacy in Wicklow. Mr. Darby's one time intimate friend, FRANCIS WILLIAM NEWMAN (brother of Cardinal JOHN HENRY NEWMAN), has given a pen picture of Mr. Darby in these days.

He describes him thus: "His bodily presence was indeed weak, a fallen cheek, a bloodshot eye, crippled limbs resting on crutches, a seldom shaven beard, a shabby suit of clothes, and a generally neglected person, drew at first pity, with wonder to see such a figure in a drawing-room. . . . Every evening he sallied forth to teach in the cabins, and, roving far and wide over mountains and amid bogs, was seldom home before midnight. By such exertions his strength was undermined. . . . His whole frame might have vied in emaciation with a monk of La Trappe. Such a phenomenon intensely excited the poor

Romanists, who looked on him as a genuine saint of the ancient breed. The stamp of Heaven seemed to them clear in a frame so wasted by austerity, so superior to worldly pomp, and so partaking in all their indigence. That a dozen such men would have done more to convert all Ireland to Protestantism than the whole apparatus of the Church Establishment was ere long my conviction."

Mr. Darby was at this time a High Churchman of the extremest type. He was a "Puseyite" before Dr. Pusey. He had controversy with Archbishop Magee regarding the union of Church and State. This he declared to be Babylonish. His study of the Scriptures made him increasingly dissatisfied with His Church position, and while, as Dr. Cronin mentions, at first Mr. Bellett and Mr. Darby (even in his clerical garb)* used to come occasionally to break bread with them while retaining their ecclesiastical connection, they ultimately wholeheartedly cast in their lot with the little company.

The addition of these two, and particularly Mr. DARBY, meant much to the meeting. W. B. Neatby, in his "History of Brethren," speaks of Mr. Darby as

*Mrs. Fegan, the mother of J. W. C. FEGAN, of the Boys' Home, London, told how she was at those meetings when Mr. Darby so attended.

"The Maker of Brethrenism

as a system—its guiding and energising spirit throughout. In the grandeur of his conception, in the irresistible vehemence of his will, in his consummate strategical instinct, in his genius for administration, and, most of all, in his immense personal ascendancy, he stands unrivalled amongst "Brethren." His energy was stupendous. He was working for Brethrenism before he was thirty, and when he was eighty he was working as hard as ever, nor had he been known to relax his efforts—efforts put forth up to the full measure of his great strength, and often beyond it—during the whole of the intervening time."

In 1828 Mr. Darby published a pamphlet entitled, "The Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ." This may be regarded as

The First "Brethren Tract,"

the first of very many. In it Mr. Darby clearly indicates that he has no thought of forming another sect or a confederation of Assemblies, In the pamphlet he states, "In the first place it is not a formal union of the outward professing bodies that is desirable; indeed, it is surprising that reflecting Protestants should desire it; far from doing good, I conceive it would be impossible that such a body could

be at all recognised as the Church of God. It would be a counterpart to Romish unity; we should have the life of the Church and the power of the Word lost, and the unity of spiritual life utterly excluded. Whatever plans may be in the order of Providence, we can only act upon the principle of grace; and true unity is the unity of the Spirit, and it must be wrought by the operation of the Spirit. *No meeting which is not framed to embrace all the children of God in the full basis of the Kingdom of the Son can find the fulness of blessing, because it does not contemplate it—because its faith does not embrace it*—"where two or three are gathered together in His Name" His Name is recorded there for blessing. . . . Further, unity is the glory of the Church; but unity to promote and secure our own interests is not the unity of the Church, but *confederacy* and denial of the nature and hope of the Church. Unity that is of the Church is the Unity of the Spirit, and can only be in the things of the Spirit, and therefore can only be perfected in spiritual persons. . . . But what are the people of God to do? Let them wait upon the Lord, and wait according to the teaching of His Spirit, and in conformity to the image, by the life of His Spirit, of His Son. Let them go their way forth by the

footsteps of the flock if they would know where the Good Shepherd feeds His flock at noon."

Again, ten years later, in 1838, in writing to a clergyman, Mr. Darby makes clear

The Original Basis of Fellowship.

He says, *"But as our Table is the Lord's, and not ours, we receive all that the Lord has received, all who fled as poor sinners for refuge to the hope set before them, and rest not in themselves, but in Christ as their Hope."*

Commenting on Mr. Darby's pamphlet, Mr. H. A. IRONSIDE, himself for many years associated with the "Grant Exclusive" Party, says: "There was no attempt at first to enforce uniformity of procedure in these meetings, and if I may be allowed to record here my profound conviction as to the chief cause of the apparent failure of the testimony of the Brethren and their eventual break-up into many different groups, I should say it was through their failing to maintain the principle that *unity is not necessarily uniformity*. If the Brethren had been content to allow the Spirit of God to have His own way in each place, and had not made the attempt to enforce common methods of procedure and Church order upon the Assemblies as they did some

years afterwards, they might have still presented a marvellous testimony to the Unity of the Spirit."

Anthony Norris Groves and the Movement.

Among those who in early days were brought into touch with the believers gathering in simple Scriptural fashion in Dublin was one who has already been named in these pages, but who merits fuller mention—ANTHONY NORRIS GROVES. He had strong and clear views regarding that spiritual unity of all true believers which Mr. Darby set forth in his pamphlet. These he consistently maintained, and from them he never swerved.

ANTHONY NORRIS GROVES was born in 1795, in Hampshire, and converted in early years in Exeter through the influence of Miss Paget. A dentist by profession, he practised first in Plymouth and afterwards in Exeter, and soon built up a successful business, the annual income from which amounted to £1500. Though successful in his profession, he had felt for several years a longing desire to spread the Gospel in dark heathen lands. In 1825 he published a tract entitled "Christian Devotedness." In this he inculcated wholehearted dedication of self and substance to

the Lord Jesus Christ. In 1825 he entered Trinity College, Dublin, as a non-resident student, with a view to his ordination as a missionary of the Church Missionary Society. From his study of the Scriptures his views on ordination were changed. He had doubts regarding the necessity of obtaining ordination. On the Sunday night previous to going across to Dublin to matriculate, burglars entered his house and took away £400 which he had put aside for that purpose. This incident he took as the Lord's guiding not to seek ordination. He, however, was still willing to go out in connection with the Church Missionary Society as a lay missionary, but when he offered to do so he was told that he could not officiate at the Lord's Supper without ordination.

He was much downcast at this, but as he thought of it there flashed through his mind, as he afterwards tells, *"That ordination of any kind to preach the Gospel is no requirement of Scripture.* To me it was the removal of a mountain.....From that moment I have myself never had a doubt of my own liberty in Christ."

The First "Brethren" Mission to Bagdad.

Henceforth he was liberated, and could look beyond men to his Risen and Ascended Lord

for his mandate. As Mrs. FRANCES BEVAN in later years so beautifully expressed this truth, he could say:

"Christ the Son of God has sent me
Through the midnight lands,
Mine the mighty ordination
Of the pierced hands."

In 1829, Mr. Groves, his wife and two boys, and three other Christians set out for St. Petersburg in a small sailing yacht lent by a friend. During the overland route through Russia to their destination, Bagdad, in Mesopotamia, great hardships were endured. They were six months in travelling to Bagdad. Mr. Groves' private means had sufficed to pay the initial expenses of the venture. Their further needs were made known to the Lord only, and He graciously, according to His promise, supplied all these needs, though their faith was sometimes sorely tested.

Arrived in Bagdad, these first "Brethren" missionaries were in the midst of many perils, and distresses. The heat was unbearable. Nearly all the inhabitants were fanatical Mohammedans. Murders and robberies were prevalent. During the second year of their stay in Bagdad plague broke out and rapidly increased, carrying away thousands of victims. To add to the misery of the people, the city was besieged, and the River Euphrates flooded

a large part of the city. In one month, through the combined effects of the pestilence, flood, war and famine, 30,000 souls, it was calculated, miserably perished. In the summer of 1832, Mr. Groves was cheered by reinforcements, amongst whom were Dr. Cronin, Lord Congleton, and FRANCIS W. NEWMAN.

There for three years Mr. Groves laboured, proclaiming the love of God and the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, and here Mrs. MARY GROVES, his heroic wife, laid down her life for the Gospel. She fell a victim to the deadly plague, yet in her death her faith was triumphant, as Mr. Groves testifies.

Judged by certain standards,

The Bagdad Mission

may appear to have been barren in results—only a few Armenians and some others were converted—yet in the highest sense it was abundantly fruitful. Mr. Groves' faith and courage inspired many to follow the same path, so that to-day there are in many far-off lands men and women whose hearts the Lord has touched, who have gone forth in simple dependence on Him in order to proclaim the same story of the Saviour's love in the dark places of the earth.

Chapter II

Expansion of the Movement

THE publication in 1828 of Mr. Darby's pamphlet on "The Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ," aroused interest and helped to make the simple mode of gathering practised by "Brethren" more widely known. In addition, in widely different places the minds of many believers were being exercised along similar lines, and quite apart from the Movement in Dublin.

The Movement in British Guiana

In 1826, Leonard Strong, a Church of England Clergyman, went out to British Guiana as rector to a parish there. His work among the slaves was abundantly blessed, but he incurred the wrath of the planters, who threatened to shoot him, and actually had him removed. He went to Peters Hall and Georgetown. Here his diligent and independent study of the Scriptures led him to renounce his living—worth £800 a year and a manse—to meet with his converts in worship on the

same Scriptural lines as he afterwards found were being practised in Dublin and elsewhere.

In fact, no one can definitely say whether the first meeting of the Movement was in Dublin, Plymouth, Georgetown, in Italy, or elsewhere. The spontaneity of the Spirit's movements is the thing most apparent.

The first fifteen or twenty years which followed the beginning of the little meeting in Dublin were years of expansion and prosperity. Rejoicing in their deliverance from clerisy, and experiencing much of the presence and unction of the Holy Spirit in their gatherings; having fervent love among themselves, and welcoming to their gatherings all who appeared to be true believers, need it be wondered that spiritual believers from the various sects were powerfully influenced and attracted?

Clergymen and Their Congregations.

In a number of cases clergymen, with their entire congregations, accepted the teaching, renounced all sectarian connections, and began meeting and worshipping in the simple way practised in Dublin.

ANDREW MILLER, the author of "Papers on Church History,"* describing those early days,

*Still issued in 3 Volumes by Pickering & Inglis.

writes: "Many no doubt who left their respective denominations and united with the 'Brethren' had very undefined thoughts as to the nature of the step they were taking. But all was new; they flocked together and gave themselves to the study of the Word of God, and soon experienced the sweetness of Christian communion, and found the Bible, as they said, to be a new Book. It was no doubt in these days of virgin freshness a most distinct and blessed work of God's Spirit, the influence of which was felt not only throughout the country, but on the Continent and in distant lands."

By 1830 there were some five or six little meetings in Ireland, while in England Christians in different places were similarly exercised, and meetings on Scriptural lines were begun, notably in London, Plymouth, and Bristol.

Associated with the founding of

The First Assembly in London

is the name of GEORGE VICESIMUS WIGRAM, his middle name indicating that he was the twentieth child of Sir GEORGE WIGRAM, merchant and shipowner in London. He was born in 1805, and was converted while holding a commission in the Army. This he relinquished, and entered Queen's College, Oxford,

intending to take holy orders. At Queen's College he came into contact with BENJAMIN WILLS NEWTON and JAMES L. HARRIS, who were also destined to become leaders in the Movement. For nearly half a century he was in close association with Mr. Darby, being described as "his trustiest lieutenant." He never faltered in his allegiance to that leader, being always found at his side through the various controversies and divisions. As a controversialist Mr. WIGRAM while always forceful and vigorous, was not always gracious and courteous. He gave freely of his wealth, and it is to his generosity that the Church of God is indebted for the "Englishman's Greek and Hebrew Concordances."

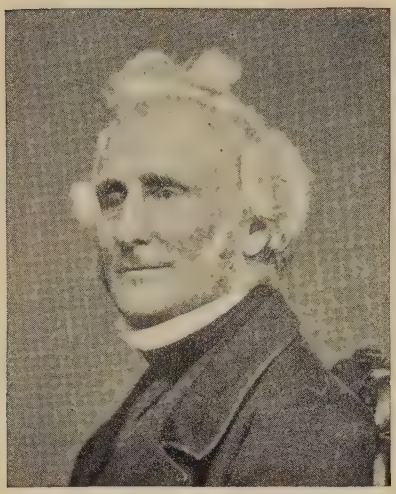
Remarkable Progress at Plymouth.

The Assembly at Plymouth was remarkable in several ways. Its growth had been exceptional. Its membership was large and influential. Commenced in 1830, the number in fellowship in 1840 had increased to 800, and five years later the number was 1200. From this centre the neighbouring towns and villages were evangelised. In the different places visited by the preachers from the Plymouth Assembly, the question would be asked, "Who are they?" and the answer given was

AN EARLY HALL AT PLYMOUTH

Raleigh Street Hall, Plymouth. (Page 42).

FOUR WELL-KNOWN LEADERS



J. G. Bellett. (Page 18).

John Nelson Darby. (Page 20).

George Muller. (Page 34).

William Kelly. (Page 77).

usually, "Oh, Plymouth Brethren," which in these days simply meant Christians from Plymouth. This reply explains the origin of the nickname which, though invariably rejected by "Brethren," is used the world over.

Another Leader—Benjamin Wills Newton.

There were several outstanding teachers and evangelists in the Assembly. Prominent among these was

BENJAMIN WILLS NEWTON, a native of Plymouth. He was born in 1807, of Quaker stock. He has been described as a distinguished theologian, scholarly, cultured, and courteous. Like several others of the early converts in the Movement, he had intended to "take Orders" in the Church of England, but from conscientious ground had relinquished this intention. He was less than twenty-three when he met Mr. DARBY on the visit of the latter to Oxford in 1830. He readily accepted the new views regarding Church order and worship. From this date till his secession from the "Brethren" in 1847, he resided in Plymouth, and exercised his ministry there, except for a few years during which he held his Fellowship, when Oxford claimed a certain portion of his time.

The First Magazine of the Movement.

In 1832 the Assembly in Plymouth received a valuable accession in the person of

JAMES LAMPDEN HARRIS, who had been a Church of England curate. Mr. Harris, in addition to being pastor and teacher, was a prolific writer. He was the founder and first editor of the *Christian Witness*, which was the precursor of *The Witness* of to-day. Associated with the early days of the Assembly in Plymouth there was also Captain PERCY FRANCIS HALL, R.N., an earnest teacher and preacher of the Word, and a zealous evangelist in the surrounding villages.

In 1836, SAMUEL PRIDEAUX TREGELLES, a brother-in-law of B. W. Newton, and who afterwards became distinguished as a Biblical scholar and Textual critic, became identified with the Assembly there.

George Muller and the Movement.

The names connected with the beginning of the Assembly in Bristol are those of George Muller and Henry Craik.

GEORGE MULLER was born in Prussia in 1805. As a youth he was careless and godless, but being brought into contact with praying people was graciously converted in 1825. He was rejected on medical grounds as unfit

for military service. This opened up the way for him to carry out his great desire to become a missionary to the Jews. With this end in view he came to London in 1829 for training. Mr. Groves' pamphlet on "Christian Devotedness" was read by him, and strongly influenced him. He accepted a pastorate of a little congregation in Teignmouth. On October 7th, 1830, he married Miss Groves, a sister of A. N. Groves, in whom he found a wife at one with him in heart and mind. In Teignmouth his reading, which was practically confined to the Bible, resulted in his clearly seeing that *only believers should be baptised*, that believers should gather *every Lord's Day to remember the Lord* in the Breaking of Bread, and that there should be *liberty for the Holy Spirit* to work in ministry. In Teignmouth also he resolved to discontinue accepting a stated salary.

HENRY CRAIK was born in Prestonpans, East Lothian, in 1805, the same year in which Mr. Muller was born. He had a brilliant career at St. Andrews University. He was offered but declined the degree of LL.D. from this University. In 1826 the great spiritual change took place which resulted in the consecration of his abilities and talents to the Lord Jesus Christ. During the period

1826-1828 he acted as tutor in the family of Anthony Norris Groves, whose personal influence and teaching greatly influenced him. He himself afterwards states: "It was not at St. Andrews, it was not at Plymouth, it was at Exeter that the Lord taught me those lessons of dependence on Himself and of *Catholic fellowship which I have sought to carry out.*"

He also acted as tutor to a family resident near Teignmouth, and made the acquaintance of Mr. Muller. In 1831 he became pastor of the Baptist Church at Shaldon, Devonshire. Teignmouth and Shaldon being adjoining villages, Mr. Muller and Mr. Craik were drawn together, and when in 1832, it was suggested that Mr. Craik should come to Bristol, he only consented to do so on the condition that his brother and fellow-labourer would go there, too.

The Beginning of Bethesda.

They felt it to be the leading of the Lord and so they came to Bristol, and in fellowship rented Gideon Chapel. On 13th August, 1832, at Gideon Chapel, Mr. Muller, Mr. Craik, one other brother and four sisters (only seven in all), sat down together, united in Church Fellowship, *"Without any rules, desiring to act only as the Lord should be pleased to give light through His Word."* Later Bethesda

Chapel was also rented. God's blessing from the beginning was upon the testimony, and numbers were added to the Assembly. At first they received only those who had been baptised as believers, but, after much prayer and searching of the Scriptures, and after receiving help from the counsel of R. C. Chapman of Barnstaple, they came to the conclusion: *"We ought to receive all whom Christ has received, irrespective of the measure of grace or knowledge which they have attained unto."* This happy association between Mr. Muller and Mr. Craik continued until broken in 1866 by the death of Mr. Craik. Mr. Muller's association with the Assembly continued for 66 years, till his removal by death in 1898. During his lifetime GEORGE MULLER, "by prayer and faith alone," erected five large Orphan Homes in Bristol, sheltered 10,000 orphans, received £1,500,000, scattered millions of Bibles and books, gave away £81,000 out of sums received for personal use, and left in all about £60, and above all a fragrant memory. His name is known and revered the wide world over. The Orphan Homes on Ashley Downs convincingly prove that God hears prayer and responds to faith.

The Barnstaple Patriarch.

In the same year—1832—that Mr. Muller and Mr. Craik began meeting in Scriptural fashion in Bristol,

ROBERT CLEAVER CHAPMAN, who had been led by the Spirit of God along the same lines, came to reside in Barnstaple, and was the means of establishing an Assembly there. Mr. Chapman was born in 1803, and was converted to God twenty years later. From that date till his Home-call in 1902, in his hundredth year, he wholeheartedly and consistently served his Lord and Master. His whole life was characterised by godliness, gracious humility, and a love to all the Brethren. He was a gifted teacher, a faithful pastor, a zealous preacher of the Gospel, preaching both inside and in the open air, even when he had attained a great age. Several of his hymns, of which he wrote many,* are in use in Assemblies to-day, including "No condemnation, O my soul," "Jesus in His Heavenly Temple," "Show me Thy wounds," "No bone of Thee was broken," and others.

While Assemblies on Scriptural lines were springing up in various parts of Ireland, England, Scotland, and America, and the

*Published under title, "Choice Hymns and Meditations."

numbers in the Assemblies were increasing, and while much attention was given to the proclamation of the Gospel at home, the preaching in other lands was not neglected. As has already been mentioned, Anthony Norris Groves with a few other workers had set out for Bagdad, and after three years of testimony there, Mr. Groves proceeded to India, where he found many open doors for the Gospel.

The Movement Spreads to Europe.

In 1838 Mr. Darby accepted an invitation from Vaud, in French Switzerland, where the conditions seemed favourable for Revival. While the invitation had come from Evangelical Dissenters, Mr. Darby had insisted on there being no denominational barriers to his fellowship. *He welcomed fellowship with all believers, irrespective of their Church connection.* His watchword was: "The Union of the children of God." It is recorded that "he preached nothing but the truths of salvation, and never allowed himself a word that was hostile to existing Churches." He was a gifted linguist, and could preach and write fluently in several languages, including French and German. While there was not wanting opposition, his work was abundantly crowned with success from the beginning.

Clergymen, many of them distinguished for their learning and piety, renounced their ecclesiastical position and connections and accepted the Scriptural principles thus set forth. In some places Wesleyanism was quite extinguished. From Switzerland the work spread to the South of France.

Mr. Darby continued till 1845 practically single-handed, preaching, teaching, and shepherding the various Assemblies which had been formed. In addition, he wrote largely to encourage the Saints and to confute adversaries. In 1845 there was a revolution in Vaud, brought about by Jesuit intrigue, and Mr. Darby's life was endangered, and, although heedless of danger, he deemed it wiser to leave Switzerland. When Mr. Darby left some of those who had opposed the work thought it would speedily die out, but the results of Mr. Darby's labours were abiding. Many of the Assemblies which were then formed continue to this day, and the members are often spoken of as "Darbisten" or "Darbisters."

The Movement in Germany.

In 1843 Mr. Muller received a letter from certain believers in Stuttgart, in Germany, wanting to know more fully the principles which were held and practised by the Assembly

in Bristol. Mr. Muller went to Stuttgart in response to this letter, and there in his own gracious way began to teach and preach these Scriptural doctrines. At first he was warmly welcomed, but difficulties arose chiefly with the Baptists. They welcomed his ministry, but refused to allow him to break bread because of his willingness to break bread with Christians in the State Church, or with Christians who had not been baptised as believers.

He writes regarding these Baptist believers thus: "Baptism and separation from the State Church had at last become almost everything to these brethren. 'We are the Church, Truth is only to be found among us. All others are in error and in Babylon.'" These were the phrases used again and again by our brother. . . . "'May God in mercy give and preserve to them and to me a lowly heart.'"

He laboured for fully six months, and so began a work in Germany which, while not of the same magnitude as that of Mr. Darby in Switzerland, was considerable and far-reaching. Many Assemblies are found there to-day.

CHAPTER III

Dissension and Division

IN order to understand the causes of the strife at Plymouth in 1845, which culminated in the formation of what has become known as "Exclusive" and "Open" Brethren, in Bristol in 1848, it is necessary to keep in view the following facts. In the early days of the Movement, while there was much insistence on the Unity of the Church, the oneness of all true believers, and the liberty of ministry under the control of the Holy Spirit, there was no attempt at uniformity in Church government or Church order. Consequently there were many Assemblies where there was little or no organisation. They repudiated all thought of leadership and arrangements of any kind. There was no recognition of elders or overseers. In other Assemblies there were godly Elder Brethren, having in some measure the gifts and qualifications set forth in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, and these acted as pastors or overseers, being recognised as such by the Assembly.

Newton and Darby in Plymouth.

Among the latter class was the Assembly at Plymouth. It had grown till in 1845 there were 1200 in fellowship, including many spiritual and gifted brethren. For several years preceding this, Mr. Darby had been little in Plymouth, while Mr. Newton had been resident there. Consequently the influence of the latter was paramount. There had been difficulties in dealing with unprofitable ministry. Mr. Darby, while on a visit to Plymouth, had suggested to Mr. Newton that he should sit where "he would hinder what was manifestly unprofitable and unedifying'" It is stated that "On one occasion Mr. Newton had in the Assembly to stop ministry which was manifestly improper, with J. N. Darby's and G. V. Wigram's presence and full concurrence."

In 1845 Mr. Newton and Mr. Harris had come to be recognised as elders and pastors of the Assembly. They, by arrangement, ministered on alternate Sundays. This was clearly a retrograde step towards the clerisy they had renounced, and was a restriction upon the liberty of ministry in the Assembly.

While the Assembly as a whole were quite satisfied with this arrangement, there was a small minority who desired the return to more

Scriptural practices. Mr. Darby was appealed to by some of those who were dissatisfied, and he visited Plymouth in 1845 on his return from Switzerland.

Regarding his coming to Plymouth, Mr. Neatby remarks: "From the moment he decided to come, Brethrenism was doomed." Unfortunately, while at one time he had been a welcome teacher in the Plymouth Assembly, the strained relationship which then existed between Mr. Newton and Mr. Darby made this intervention unacceptable to the former. They had for some time been hopelessly at variance, both as regards prophetic teaching and Church order. Mr. Newton had published in 1842 a book, "Thoughts on the Apocalypse," which Mr. Darby criticised severely, and a war of pamphlets ensued. The chief question in dispute was the relation of the Church to the Great Tribulation. Strong feelings were displayed by both, and strong words used. Both were equally dogmatic and unyielding, and, as dogmatism increased, grace diminished. Mr. Darby said of Mr. Newton's views that "they were of the very worst moral effect to the Saint." Mr. Newton considered this a very strong expression, and retaliated by stating that the foundations of Christianity were gone if the views of his opponent pre-

vailed. Mr. Darby's visit did not produce the result he desired. He protested and remonstrated privately and publicly. The dissensions continued for months, and, finding his efforts unavailing, Mr. Darby at the morning meeting on 26th October, 1845, stated he "was going to quit the Assembly," and on the last Lord's Day in 1845, he with fifty or sixty others began to break bread in another place in Plymouth.

This separate meeting marks

The Beginning of "Exclusivism,"

a departure from the all-embracing and catholic fellowship of saints for which Mr. Darby had previously contended. It has had far-reaching and disastrous effects in the succeeding years. Had Mr. Darby been able fully to foresee these effects, he undoubtedly would have hesitated before taking the step he did. Exclusivism and its sub-divisions has come to be what Mr. Darby in his pamphlet in 1828 denounced and reprobated—circles and confederations of Assemblies.

The action of Mr. Darby was regarded by many of the leading Brethren as hasty, harsh, and unscriptural, and attempts were made to heal the breach. Meetings were held in Plymouth and London, but were unavailing.

The following extract from "Darbyism," by Henry Groves, will show how strong were the feelings in certain quarters against Mr. Darby's action in this matter. He writes: "Mr. Darby comes to Plymouth and finds Mr. Newton's influence paramount. What an opportunity for grace to shine in, for Christ to triumph in the Saint over self! But, alas! *self triumphed over Christ on both sides* of the conflict, though in different ways, and the schismatic spirit of 'I am of Newton' and 'I am of Darby' came in and carried all before it, but those who had been really walking before God. . . . "

"The grounds of this melancholy division were, as we gather from Mr. Darby's narrative, sectarianism, clericalism, and erroneous prophetic views. There was *no charge of heresy*: there was not one Scriptural ground on which the separation could be justified; but as if there had been no injunction to mutual forbearance and long-suffering, and as if the Blood of the Lamb no longer constituted the true foundation of all true fellowship here, as it is of all the fellowship in the Glory, we find Mr. Darby either excommunicating the Saints with whom for so many years he had been in fellowship, or perhaps, more correctly, excommunicating himself; in either case, rending the Body of the Lord and

saying, in fact, as one of old who had no mother's love to yearn over the child, 'Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it'" (1 Kings 3. 26).

Developments in Plymouth.

In the early summer of 1847, certain developments occurred in Plymouth which strengthened Mr. Darby's position, and detached many of Mr. Newton's supporters. Manuscript notes of a lecture by Mr. Newton on the Sixth Psalm were lent to Mrs. J. L. Harris, whose husband had since Mr. Darby's secession openly supported him. Without inquiring of Mr. Newton as to the accuracy of these notes, they were published, and Mr. Newton was charged with heresy. The heresy consisted in teaching that the Lord Jesus Christ suffered Divine wrath apart from His vicarious sufferings on the Cross—as Man, as coming by His human birth under "Adam's Federal Headship," and, as an Israelite, as born into Israel when Israel was under the curse. In refuting the heretical teaching of EDWARD IRVING (founder of the Irvingites or Catholic Apostolic Church) regarding the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, Mr. Newton had himself fallen into heresy. It must always, however, be kept in view that he was ever

insistent that to him the Lord Jesus Christ was very God of very God, yet truly Man, absolutely sinless and having no sin, original or otherwise.

It is interesting to note in connection with the charge of heresy levelled against Mr. Newton, that apparently as early as 1835 he had written a paper which appeared in the "Christian Witness" on the subject of "Our Lord's Humanity." Certain unguarded expressions in this paper might well have based a charge of heresy such as he was afterwards charged with. The paper met with much acceptance. It was reprinted with additions and was widely circulated for 10 or 12 years. There were no criticisms nor expressions of disapproval till 1847.

Mr. Newton, in November, 1847, issued a "Statement and Acknowledgment Respecting Certain Doctrinal Errors." In this Statement he *unreservedly confesses* as sin the doctrine that Christ was born under the federal headship of Adam, and expresses his *deep and unfeigned grief* and sorrow for having taught it. Other parts of his teaching he recalled for further consideration. He had also been charged with teaching that the Lord's body was mortal. He later explained that what he meant by "mortal" was not "subject to death," but

"*capable* of dying." He pointed out that for years "Brethren" had sung a hymn in which the word was used in this sense, the hymn being one written by JAMES G. DECK, in which one line runs as originally written, "Our mortal flesh and blood partake."

The First Secession from the Movement.

The following month Mr. Newton left Plymouth for London, and this marks his secession from the Movement. He afterwards became the pastor of an Independent congregation in the City of London. He did not again teach the heretical doctrines which he had unreservedly withdrawn, for no trace of it can be found in any of his published writings thereafter. He attained the great age of ninety-three years, and died loved and revered by his intimate associates.

The late HENRY VARLEY spoke of him as "the godliest man I have ever known." W. B. Neatby considers he was much maligned and unjustly treated. He writes: "His name to this day is regarded with absolute loathing by thousands who have never troubled to read a single tract of all that he has written. . . . I know not where to turn for a parallel to usage so cruel and unrighteous as that from which Newton suffered." Referring to the spirit

in which Mr. Newton met this treatment, he writes: "The light of one text at least shone steadily on his path, 'When He was reviled He reviled not again: when He suffered he threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously' " (1 Peter 2. 23).

"The Bethesda Question."

The heresy regarding the non-vicarious suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ was rejected and condemned among "Brethren" everywhere, but trouble occasioned by it arose at Bethesda Chapel, Bristol, where Mr. Muller and Mr. Craik were still labouring. The seven members in 1832 had by 1847 grown into a large and spiritual Assembly. When Mr. Darby began the second meeting in Plymouth in 1845, the Assembly in Bristol did not take sides, but welcomed fellowship with believers free from the error, from both meetings.

In April, 1848, Captain WOODFALL and his brother came to reside in Bristol, and asked for fellowship at Bethesda Chapel. They came from the Assembly in Plymouth that Mr. Newton was associated with. Before being received they were visited and carefully questioned as to whether they held Mr. Newton's heresy. The brethren who visited them were fully satisfied that they did *not*

hold it nor any other unsound doctrine, and that there was no Scriptural reason for refusing fellowship. They were accordingly received, but Mr. Alexander and two others objected, and ultimately withdrew from Bethesda Chapel.

Shortly afterwards Mr. Darby visited Mr. Muller in Bristol, and had friendly intercourse with him. Not many days later, however, Mr. Darby publicly stated at a large meeting in Exeter that he could no more go to Bethesda Chapel, as the Woodfalls had been received there. The elders in Bethesda Chapel believed that they had acted righteously in receiving Captain Woodfall and his brother—believers who were sound in doctrine and morals—and that seeing these believers had come to live in Bristol it was a case of "rescue" more than "reception."

A letter was issued by the elders giving the reasons for acting as they did. This letter, known as

"The Letter of the Ten,"

did not satisfy Mr. Darby and his associates, but rather intensified their feelings. The Assembly in Bristol was stigmatised as disloyal to Christ, careless of His honour and glory, teaching doctrines derogatory to His

sinless humanity, and leaving the door open to all evil doctrines.

Henry Groves relates that shortly after the issue of "The Letter of the Ten," Mr. Darby visited Bristol and had an interview with Mr. Muller and Mr. Craik. He urged that the Assembly at Bethesda take up the matter of Mr. Newton's tracts, and pass a Church condemnation on them. Finding he could not prevail on them to do this, he sought to intimidate them by threats of cutting them off from the fellowship of believers in other places. Shortly afterwards he put this threat into execution, and as Mr. Groves states: "He went from one place to another, seeking to enforce everywhere the adoption of his course towards Bethesda. Assemblies of saints, one after another, were placed under the ban of excommunication for *no other cause than not being able to see that Mr. Darby was right and Bethesda wrong.* On reaching Leeds he issued his lithographic circular bearing the post mark of August 26th, 1848, cutting off not only Bethesda, but all Assemblies who received any one who went there."

The setting up of the separate meeting in Plymouth in December, 1845, marked the beginning of Exclusivism—the thin end of the wedge. This circular of August, 1848,

marks the driving of the wedge home. The testimony raised in 1825 to the oneness of all true believers, and so graciously owned and blessed by God, had been rent in twain. Mr. Neatby terms this circular "A decree that was to spread strife, misery, and shame like a conflagration to the remotest bounds of Christendom." This is strong language, but the subsequent history of the Movement proves it was justified.

The elders of the Bethesda Assembly indignantly repudiated the grave assertions made against the Assembly. Meeting after meeting was held to see what could be done in the matter and, after having painfully and painstakingly examined Mr. Newton's tracts dealing with the heresy, they declared, in unmistakable terms, that the teaching was heretical. Their finding was: *"No one defending, maintaining, or upholding Mr. Newton's views or tracts should be received into communion."*

The Fateful Meeting of Muller and Darby.

Apparently, in July, 1849, Mr. Darby visited Mr. Muller at the Orphan Homes, Bristol, with overtures for a healing of the division. According to a letter written by Mr. Muller in 1883, Mr. Darby said: "As you have judged Newton's tracts, there is no

longer any reason why we should be separated." Mr. Muller's reply was: "I have this moment only ten minutes' time, having an important engagement before me, and as you have acted so wickedly in this matter I cannot now enter into it as I have no time." Mr. Darby rose and left. They never saw each other again.

Though Mr. Darby had indicated there was now no longer cause for a separation, he made no further attempt to heal the breach. Instead, he more strenuously than ever excommunicated all who opposed him. Saints and Assemblies at home and abroad had to judge the Bethesda question and take sides. Believers, to escape the discord and evil, were known to have fled to the other side of the Globe, but the controversy followed them there.

Chapter IV

Further Expansion in Spite of Division

THE years which followed the cleavage were, in spite of the resulting injury to the testimony, years of expansion. The testimony, however, flowed in two distinct channels—channels which have remained distinct ever since. The various Assemblies which accepted Mr. Darby's leading, and endorsed his excommunication of Bethesda and all however remotely associated with it, were closely linked together. In these "Exclusive" Assemblies Mr. Darby was supreme. Through his tireless energy and unceasing efforts "Exclusive" Assemblies multiplied, and through his strong personality he was able to hold them together as a practically united Company till about a year before his death in 1881. During this period Exclusivism reached its zenith.

In considering the beginnings and

The Developments of Exclusivism,

two letters, both written to Mr. Darby, deserve attention—one by A. N. Groves in 1836, and the other by G. V. WIGRAM two years later. Mr. Groves had returned from his mission to Bagdad, and was alarmed and grieved to find on his return what he considered indications of *departure from the original basis of gathering*, which included all the children of God, and the tendency to a narrower basis of fellowship.

A. N. Groves' "Prophetic Letter."

In an endeavour to arrest this departure he wrote Mr. Darby a long epistle, very courteous and loving in tone, but faithfully dealing with the matter, and pointing out the evils that would follow if the course were persisted in. The following extracts will indicate the gist of the letter. He writes: "I wish you to feel assured that nothing has estranged my heart from you, or lowered my confidence in your being still animated by the same enlarged and generous purposes that once so won and riveted me; and although I feel you have departed from those principles by which you once hoped to have effected them, and are in principle returning to the City from whence you departed, still my soul so reposes in the

truth of your heart to God that I feel it needs but a step or two more to advance, and you will see all the evil of the systems from which you wish to be separated spring up among yourselves. . . . You will be known more by what you witness against than what you witness for. . . . It has been asserted that I have changed my principles; all I can say is, that as far as I know what these principles were in which I gloried in first discovering them in the Word of God, I now glory in them ten times more since I have experienced their applicability to all the various and perplexing circumstances of the present state of the Church: allowing you to give every individual and collection of individuals the standing God gives them without identifying ourselves with any of their evils. . . . I ever understood our principles of communion to be the possession of the common life . . . of the family of God. . . . These were our early thoughts, and are my most matured ones. The transition your little bodies have undergone in no longer standing forth as the witnesses for the glorious simple truth so much as standing forth as witnesses against all that they judge error . . . have lowered them in my apprehension from Heaven to earth in their position of witnesses . . . and the position which this occu-

pying the seat of judgment will place you in will be this: the most narrow-minded and bigoted will rule because his conscience cannot and will not give way, and therefore the more enlarged heart must yield. It is into this position, dear Darby, I feel little flocks are fast tending if they have not already attained it, making "light," not "life" the measure of communion. . . . You must not, however, dear brother, think from anything I have said that I shall not write freely and fully to you relative to things in India, assured in my own heart that your enlarged and generous spirit so richly taught of the Lord will one day burst again those bonds which narrower minds than yours have encircled you with, and come forth again rather anxious to advance all the living members of the Living Head into the stature of men than to be encircled by any little bodies, however numerous, that own you for their founder. I honour, love, and respect your position in the Church of God, but the deep conviction I have that your spiritual power was incalculably greater when you walked in the midst of the various congregations of the Lord's people manifesting forth the life and power of the Gospel than now, is such that I cannot but write the above as a proof of my love and confidence that your

mind is above considering who these remarks came from, rather what truth there may be in them."

Mr. Groves' entreaties and warnings were, however, unheeded. The dangers and evils which, as early as 1838, he foresaw, have all so sadly come to pass in the chequered history of "Exclusivism," so that his letter has come to be regarded as "almost prophetic."

G. V. Wigram and the "Central Meeting."

A letter of a different type is that addressed by Mr. WIGRAM in 1838 to Mr. Darby. He writes: "There is a matter exercising the minds of some of us at this present time, in which you may be (and in some sense certainly are) concerned. The question I refer to is, 'How are the meetings for communion of Saints in these parts to be regulated?' Would it be for the glory of God and the increase of testimony to have one Central Meeting, the common responsibility of all within reach, and as many meetings subordinate to it as grace might vouchsafe, or to hold it to be better to allow the meetings to grow up as they may, without connection and dependent upon the energy of individuals only? . . . truly provided that there be in London some place where the wanderer can find rest and communion, my

desire is met; though the glory of the Lord will, of course, be still to be cared for."

In this letter we have the first suggestion of the linking up of the Assemblies—

The Federation of Assemblies

—which Mr. Darby denounced in 1828, and also the germ of the Central Meeting which controlled and dominated "Exclusivism."

In support of the "Central Meeting," Mr. Darby pointed out that while the New Testament speaks of the "churches" of a province, it always refers to the "Church" in a town. Hence he taught that all the believers in the various Assemblies within the civil administrative area called London were one Church. The delimitation of the Chruch by municipal boundaries had strange effects. Woolwich and Islington are eight miles distant on opposite sides of the Thames, but, being within the area, are within the same Church, while Plumstead, though it closely adjoins Woolwich, is not.

Following on the suggestion in Mr. Wigram's letter, a room was hired in Central London for Saturday Evening Conferences, at which all questions such as receiving into fellowship and cutting off in the Assemblies within the area were decided. These decisions were

binding within the area, and from the prestige which the London meetings held far beyond it. In the strong hands of Mr. Darby, the Central Meeting proved an instrument by which he controlled and dominated the Assemblies.

Mr. Neatby writes: "Darby's influence, for example, would have sufficed in the long run to secure the expulsion of any teacher, no matter how honoured a name he bore, or how strongly he was entrenched in the love and esteem of the Church in which he laboured."

While conceding that the Church of God is the aggregate of all believers in Christ, and the local Church is a similar local aggregate, the "Exclusive" Assemblies claimed that their meeting in any place was

The Sole "Expression" of the Church of God

there. It was Divinely recognised: nothing else was. In 1864 Mr. Darby, writing to Mr. Spurr of Sheffield regarding the case of a Mr. Goodall, says: "He (or any one else) is rejected in London. The Assembly in London have weighed, and I with them, the case and counted him as either excommunicated or in Schism. I put the two cases, for I only speak of the principle. I take part in this act, and hold him to be *outside the Church of God on earth,* being outside (in either case) what represents

it in London, I am bound by Scripture to count them so. I come to Sheffield: there he breaks bread and is—in what? *Not in the Church of God on earth, for he is out of it in London, and there are not two Churches on earth, cannot be, so as to be in one and out of another.*"

What was the cause of Mr. Goodall's excommunication in London? Not doctrinal evil nor moral evil, but simply this: The Walworth-Peckham Assembly having refused to bow to the Central Meeting on a certain matter had been judged as acting "in self will." Accordingly, the whole Assembly, including Mr. Goodall, had been cut off. As a sequel to this, Mr. Goodall having been received by the Sheffield Exclusive Assembly, it was excommunicated. Hence the occasion for Mr. Darby's letter to Mr. Spurr endeavouring to justify the procedure.

Is it to be wondered that these "Exclusive" Brethren in Sheffield, after their excommunication, wrote thus: "In regard to the long-standing Bethesda trouble, we feel it right to state that we judge with you, *it is high time for the Bethesda test to be annulled*, and we shall henceforth hold ourselves free from it. We believe it to be equally needless and useless. It is a question with many of us whether it ever brought any glory to God or good to man."

It was only the dominating personality of Mr. Darby that held the "Exclusive" Assemblies so long together. As Mr. Neatby remarks, "When Darby's fiat ceased to be law the party was broken: when Darby died it was scattered like dust."

The First "Open" Brethren.

The Assemblies which, in 1848, refused to follow Mr. Darby, and continued to receive all believers who were personally sound in doctrine and morals, became known as "Open" Brethren. While they varied in many ways, they rejected as unscriptural the linking up of Assemblies in circles or confederacies. They welcomed and desired the fullest fellowship of all the Lord's people, but they believed that each Assembly was primarily responsible to God as to its reception of believers, church order, and discipline.

Mr. W. H. BENNET, in the *Witness* in 1890, dealing with the mutual relations of Assemblies to one another, finds in the seven golden candlesticks of Revelation 1. 12 a beautiful figure showing this relationship. He writes, "They were distinct one from another, yet they were most truly linked together. The bond, however, was an invisible one. It was the presence of Christ unseen by the natural

eye, but most real to faith. Each Church stood in its dependence upon and subjection to Him, and therefore all were truly one, and any person going from one Church to another in His Name was welcomed."

Not mere outward uniformity, but the Unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace is that which binds the Assemblies of His people. Weak and insufficient, some may say, but truly all-sufficient, since Divine love and wisdom supply it, and Divine power maintains it. How insecure and shifting is the sand. How like unstable man. Martin Luther, conscious of his own weakness when opposing the power of Rome, yet also truly realising the sufficiency of Divine grace, replies to Miltitz, the Papal legate: "God stays the waves of the sea upon the shore, and He stays them—with sand."

The Marks of "Exclusive" and "Open" Brethren.

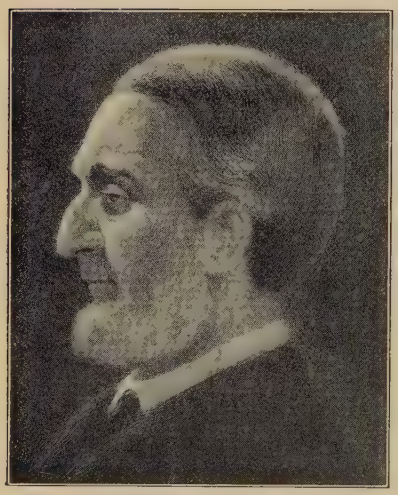
The "Exclusive" Brethren were more given to teaching or ministry of the Word than preaching the Gospel, yet there were among them those who were zealous and successful Gospel preachers, such as Andrew Miller, H. F. Witherby, Charles Stanley, Alfred Mace, George Cutting, and Dr. W. T. P. Wolston.

A WELL-KNOWN HALL IN LONDON

Entrance to Park Street Hall, 57 Park Street, Islington.
Exclusive Centre in London. Place of many decisions.

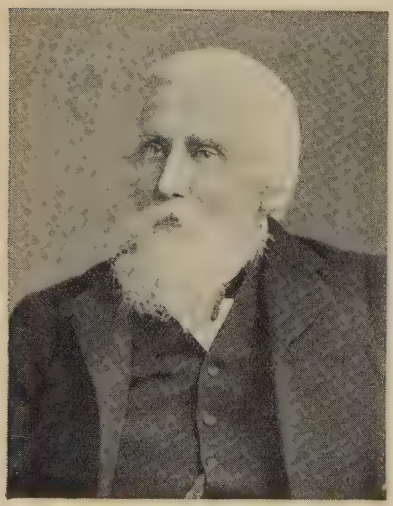
To face page 64

FOUR PROMINENT LEADERS



B. W. Newton. (Page 33).

F. W. Grant. (Page 81).



C. E. Stuart. (Page 83).

F. E. Raven. (Page 86).

Mr. Darby, along with Mr. Wigram and others, visited America and Canada. Mr. Darby came into contact with many of the leaders of the religious life in these countries, and although opposition was not lacking, his labours were abundantly fruitful. As in Vaud, there were many notable cases of clergymen sacrificing all and becoming definitely associated with the Movement. Two brothers, FREDERICK W. GRANT, well known for his works, "The Numerical Bible," "Facts and Theories as to a Future State," etc., and ROBERT T. GRANT, both Episcopalian clergymen, were at first opposed to the teaching and principles of "Brethren," but through reading their literature they resigned their charges and became identified with these Companies. They afterwards became prominent leaders in the Movement.

D. L. Moody and J. N. Darby.

An incident which occurred at certain meetings addressed by Mr. Darby in the Farwell Hall, Chicago, on D. L. Moody's invitation, was characteristic of Mr. Darby, who would brook no contradiction.

Mr. Darby and Mr. Moody differed on the question of man's free will. Mr. Darby held that man's will was so perverted that he could

not even "will to be saved." This Mr. Moody could not accept, as he insisted on man's responsibility to believe the Gospel when presented to him. "God's biddings are God's enablings." Man would be condemned for rejecting the Gospel. The controversy became so heated that in one meeting Mr. Darby closed his Bible and refused to proceed.

The Movement and Mission Work.

The special feature of the "Open" Assemblies has been and still is their zeal in the Gospel both in the Homeland and in the foreign field. Time would fail to tell of the labours of Harry Moorhouse, John Hambleton, George Brealey, David Rea, Alexander Marshall, Donald Ross, and many other earnest evangelists through whose labours vast numbers were saved and Assemblies established. From the Home Assemblies more than 1000 men and women have gone to carry the Gospel to those who sit in darkness. They have gone out, as A. N. Groves did at the beginning, in the dependence of faith. Their labours have been abundantly blessed in India, China, Malay, South and Central Africa, and in the Islands of the seas. There trophies have been won for the Lord and Assemblies formed on Scriptural lines. Such names as A. N.

Groves, Henry Groves, Leonard Strong, Albert R. Fenn, Dr. Baedeker, Frederick Stanley Arnot, Dan Crawford, Dr. J. Norman Case are a few of honoured names in the long list.

During the years that followed the Bethesda Division, the "Exclusive" Assemblies would permit "occasional fellowship" with believers from the different denominations, but fellowship with "Open" Brethren was strictly forbidden. The barrier erected by Mr. Darby must be maintained, and for nearly a century Assemblies of "Open" Brethren have been persistently traduced and slandered, so that many "Exclusive" Brethren in all sincerity believe that George Muller and the other believers in Bethesda Chapel were cut off for holding Newton's heresy, whereas they denounced the heresy and have never knowingly admitted into their fellowship any holding that doctrine or other fundamental error.

In 1849 Mr. Darby had stated to Mr. Muller that there was now no reason why they should be separated. Yet in 1864 we find him writing: "The evil at Bethesda is the most unprincipled admission of blasphemers against Christ, the coldest contempt for Him I ever came across."

Regarding this slander Mr. Neatby remarks: "This statement was not merely an incal-

culable exaggeration; it was *absolutely false*, root and branch." Yet in spite of calumny and evil report, the "Open" Assemblies, assured they were walking in the path marked out by the Spirit in 1825, and that they had in this the approval and blessing of the Lord, went on from strength to strength.

ROBERT C. CHAPMAN surely expressed the Grace of his Lord when he refused to call those who differed from him "Exclusive Brethren." He called them instead "Brethren dearly beloved and longed for, whose consciences lead them to refuse my fellowship and to deprive me of theirs."

How grievous were the injuries to Christian fellowship which the Bethesda discipline inflicted are seen in the severance by Dr. Cronin of his fellowship with Anthony Norris Groves. Dr. Cronin was a warm-hearted, zealous Christian. He had had twenty-five years of intimate fellowship with Mr. Groves. He had laboured in the Gospel, and suffered with him in Bagdad, yet, because Mr. Groves continued having fellowship with the believers in Bethesda Chapel, Dr. Cronin, under the spell of Mr. Darby, forbids Mr. Groves to come to his home. In later years Dr. Cronin himself had to suffer even more severely from this same discipline.

J. N. Darby Charged with Heresy.

In 1858 and in later years certain articles contributed by Mr. Darby to the *Bible Treasury* on "The Sufferings of Christ," caused much concern and anxiety to certain of those in fellowship with him. The gist of these articles was that the Lord Jesus Christ suffered in a threefold way. First and pre-eminently He suffered when on the Cross He made atonement for sin and endured the wrath of God. "As a dying Saviour He suffered from the hand of God for sin." Second, "He suffered for righteousness as a living man from men." And third, He endured sufferings at the hands of God which were non-atoning. Regarding the third class of the Lord's sufferings, which were non-atoning, Mr. Darby in his "Introduction" to the Second Edition of his tract on "The Sufferings of Christ," wrote: "There was a vast scene of agony for Christ's soul neither inflicted by God for what He was made nor by man for what He was; but the agonies of His holy soul in this world, His own sufferings in which He ever looked up to God and referred to God's will, and which in part were connected with the ruin of Israel and His own cutting off as Messiah."

This "third class" of the Lord's sufferings, on Mr. Darby's own admission, were not found

at all in the New Testament, but were found in the Psalms. Commenting on Psalm 69. 26, he writes: "Here we have evidently more than man's persecutions. They take advantage of God's Hand upon the Sorrowing One to add to His burden and grief. *This is not atonement,* but there is sorrow and smiting from God."

Several esteemed teachers among the "Exclusive" Brethren were deeply grieved at this teaching regarding the third class of sufferings endured by Christ which they asserted, if not identical, were at least similar to the heretical teaching of Mr. Newton. This suggestion Mr. Darby vehemently repudiated, asserting that those who made it were "either fools or knaves." The difference between Mr. Newton's and his teaching regarding the non-atoning sufferings of the Lord, Mr. Darby declared, consisted in this: "Mr. Newton's doctrine was that He was born under it, and sought to escape it by prayer and obedience and piety, and partially did; mine that He was not born under it at all, but instead of having to seek to escape it entered into the sorrow in love and grace for the deliverance of others. That is, one is exactly and essentially the opposite of the other."

The controversy continued for several years.

On its being pointed out to Mr. Darby that his teaching was causing much grief to many, he indicated "his willingness to leave the fellowship rather than retract the teaching." The teaching and its effects on the consciences of the believers were afterwards considered by nine leading Brethren, including Mr. Wigram, Dr. Cronin, Mr. Kelly, and Mr. Stoney. They gave a somewhat halting and half-hearted decision in favour of Mr. Darby. They wrote: "We are not aware that the subject of the sufferings of Christ is everywhere rife, or at least in many places, or in many minds. So far as we know, this statement is unwarrantably strong. Here the state of things is the very contrary, and we cannot be content to allow our brother J. N. Darby to withdraw himself from us under any such plea, to us not true in the place we are. We know not of any consciences so troubled, nor is there anything in the writings referred to which has affected our own consciences."

How gentle and how different is the treatment Mr. Darby received at the hands of his brethren compared with the treatment which twenty years earlier Mr. Newton had received. As a result of the controversy, several gifted Brethren including Captain PERCY HALL, WILLIAM HENRY DORMAN, and THOMAS NEW-

BERRY (of "The Englishman's Bible"), all of whom had long been associated with Mr. Darby, in 1866 definitely severed their connection with the "Exclusive" Assemblies. They felt the inconsistency of "repelling with unrelenting severity the most distant connection with an evil, while, at the same time, conscious of being in the *very closest association with what is suspected to be but a modification of the same thing.*"

CHAPTER V

Exclusive Divisions and Disintegration

I. The Ramsgate or Kelly Division.

THE closing years of Mr. Darby's life saw the formation of a Party within the "Exclusive" Assemblies. This Party viewed with alarm the influx of young converts brought into the Assemblies through the labours of evangelists, as they feared these young converts were not sufficiently taught their distinctive doctrines. They desired a more restricted fellowship—a fellowship confined to those whom they designated "spiritual." They were known as

"**New-Lumpists**"

(1 Cor. 5. 7). At first Mr. Darby strenuously opposed this line of teaching, but in vain. G. V. Wigram viewed with misgiving the developments that were taking place. He declared the Brethren had been "blowing ecclesiastical bubbles" and "playing Church."

When he died on New Year's Day, 1879, his friends believed that he was removed from the coming evils.

In the year 1878 there was the beginning of what, to the "Exclusive" Assemblies, was their most serious trouble since 1845. In this year Dr. Cronin, now an old saint, is found in the "Exclusive" Meeting in Kennington, London. Among his friends is an earnest Church of England clergyman from Ryde, in the Isle of Wight. This godly man, Mr. Finch by name, is influenced and attracted by the teaching of "Brethren," and is received into an "Exclusive" Assembly in London. On returning to Ryde and making known to his congregation his decision to identify himself with "Brethren," and giving the Scriptural reasons which had guided him in the step, certain of his congregation desired to follow his example.

There was already an "Exclusive" Meeting in Ryde. It was, however, in a low spiritual state. One of those in fellowship had married in France his deceased wife's sister, which was then illegal in England. This conduct caused the majority to leave the meeting. They did not, however, set up another meeting for Breaking of Bread, but met for prayer Mr. Darby had himself declared concerning

the meeting in Ryde: "Never will I put my foot into that unclean place. I have known it for twenty years to be a defiled meeting."

It is thus not to be wondered that the godly Mr. Finch felt that he could not associate with the Ryde meeting, nor could he advise the others who with him had left the Established Church to do so. He and they started breaking bread in his own house. Dr. Cronin, who naturally was interested in his friend's actings, visited the official "Exclusive" meeting in Ryde with the intention of helping. He found it hopeless to do so, and broke bread with Mr. Finch and those with him. He repeated his visit to Mr. Finch a few weeks later, and again broke bread. On his suggestion Mr. Finch and the others meeting with him removed to a public hall. On his return to Kennington after his second visit he reported to the Assembly what he had done, and also wrote to Mr. Darby. He was remonstrated with, dealt with, and finally excommunicated for his action. For months he sat in a back seat in the meeting, out of fellowship, weeping.

The Kennington Assembly may appear to have been severe and harsh in their treatment of the aged saint, but a majority of the Ramsgate Assembly—a stronghold of "New Lump-

ism"—thought otherwise. They alleged that the Kennington Meeting had been too lax and slow in dealing with him, and therefore cut it off.

A minority in Ramsgate refused to agree with the action of the majority, so the majority withdrew and set up another meeting in Ramsgate. Thus the trouble spread. For many months

"The Ramsgate Question"

was the all-engrossing topic in London and beyond. At length Hornsey Rise Meeting by a large majority decided to recognise the Meeting in Ramsgate consisting of the majority who had seceded. The Park Street Meeting, formerly the Priory Meeting, which owed its prestige to the fact that it was the Meeting at which Mr. Darby broke bread when in London, followed suit by a large majority. This action by these two Meetings was contrary in two ways to what Mr. Darby had taught for forty years, viz. (first) that an Assembly decision must be absolutely unanimous; and (second), that as the Assembly in London, though meeting in different halls, was one Assembly, no one Meeting could act in discipline without the fellowship of all. These principles were, however, con-

veniently ignored, as there was scarcely a Meeting in the London area which was unanimous on the question, and, in addition, the "Central Meeting" was divided. Out of twenty-six Meetings represented, there were five which condemned the seceders in Ramsgate. After many meetings and much disputation the issue in 1881 was narrowed down to this, that "all should bow to the Park Street decision." This decision recognised the Meeting of the seceders in Ramsgate as the Assembly—the expression of the Church of God—in Ramsgate. *All who refused to accept the Park Street decision were regarded as cut off.* This resulted in the excommunication of a large number of Assemblies in the British Isles and in the West Indies.

Secession of William Kelly.

WILLIAM KELLY was an outstanding teacher, of whom C. H. Spurgeon said: "William Kelly had a mind made for the Universe, but narrowed by Darbyism." He did not endorse the Park Street judgment, and could see nothing wrong in Dr. Cronin's action. Mr. Darby at this time was in his eighty-first year, infirm and sick. He had endeavoured to restrain the extremists, who were pressing matters, and in particular did

not desire to be separated from Mr. Kelly, but, when he realised a division was inevitable, he resignedly said, "It must be the will of the Lord."

Among other leading Brethren who refused to bow to the Park Street decision were Dr. THOMAS NEATBY (the father of the author of "The History of Plymouth Brethren), ANDREW MILLER, the Church Historian, and J. A. VON POSECK.

Mr. Darby did not long survive the Kelly division, but passed to his Reward in 1882, at the age of 82. He was buried in Bournemouth.

II. The Montreal or Grant Division in Canada.

In 1881 most of the Canadian "Exclusive" Assemblies, with their teachers, had endorsed the Park Street decision, and rejected William Kelly and his associates. The "Exclusive" Assembly in Toronto issued this statement: "After patiently waiting upon and remonstrating with a few brethren who refuse to accept that judgment (*i.e.*, Park Street), we are forced in deep sorrow of heart to withdraw from them, to affirm and maintain *the principles of the Church of God.* Our acceptance of the judgment of the Park Street

decision is *not based on knowledge of the facts and circumstances* connected with it, but upon the ground, 'There is One Body and One Spirit.' This decision we fully receive as having the sanction of the Lord, and must therefore be binding on us, for whatsoever ye shall bind in earth shall be bound in Heaven. We adopt the course in order to preserve fellowship with our brethren who are endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; otherwise we should deny the very foundation of the Church of God and *the truth of the One Body as the ground of gathering.*"

Among those who signed this statement for the Toronto Assembly was FREDERICK W. GRANT (the author of "The Numerical Bible" and other works). He was regarded by some as a teacher as gifted as Mr. Darby. He and the other signatories had good reason very shortly afterwards to alter their belief that the Park Street decision was binding in Heaven. For some years previous to Mr. Darby's death Mr. Grant had been troubled and distressed with a new line of teaching which was being introduced, making a distinction between the life which a believer received when he believed the Gospel, and eternal life *received at some later date*—between

life in Christ and sealing with the Holy Spirit. Mr. Grant believed and taught that the Holy Spirit seals all who believe in Christ at once and until the day of redemption. This he rightly believed to have been the earlier teaching of "Brethren," including Mr. Darby himself.

Trouble in Toronto.

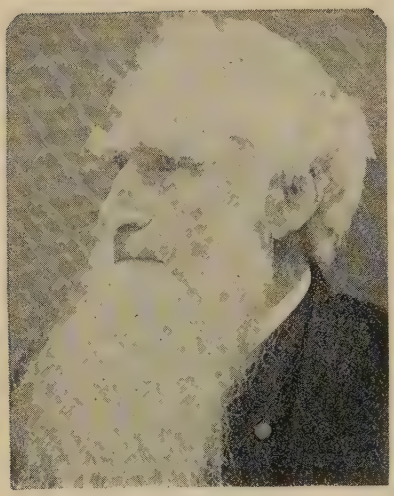
In 1880 Robert F. Grant visited his brother Frederick W. Grant at his home in Toronto. A young man, who had professed faith in Christ on his sick-bed, and who realised that he would soon be absent from the body, had expressed a desire to "remember the Lord" in the Breaking of Bread. He had been visited by two brethren who reported to the Assembly in Toronto one Lord's Day morning when R. F. Grant was present. Their report was to the effect that they believed he was truly a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, but that he had never been sealed with the Holy Spirit, and so was unfit to have communion. The young man shortly afterwards passed into the presence of the Lord without being able to have his desire to remember his Lord gratified.

R. F. Grant was deeply grieved, and protested strongly against the attitude taken up. He wrote an article entitled "When is a Believer Sealed?" which Frederick W. Grant published in his magazine, "Helps by the Way."

A WELL-KNOWN HALL IN BRISTOL

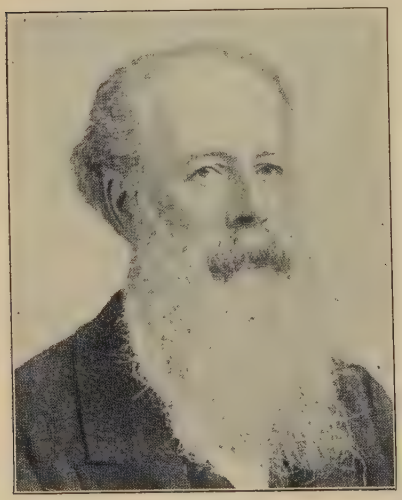
Where George Muller and Henry Craik began work in 1832. Still in use.

FOUR PIONEERS ABROAD

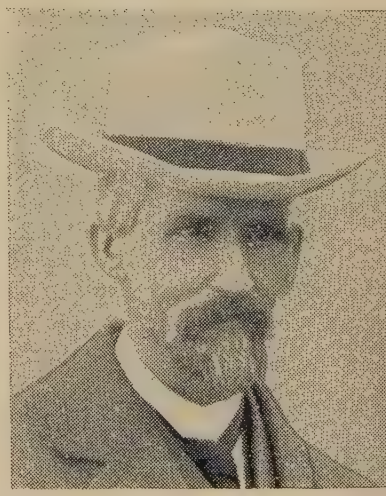


LEONARD STRONG, Demerara. (Page 29).

Count GUICCIARDINI, Italy.



ALBERT R. FENN, Spain. (Page 67).



FREDERICK STANLEY ARNOT, Africa. (Page 67)

Frederick W. Grant, after fully considering the subject and submitting his views to other leading Brethren, published a tract entitled "Life in Christ and Sealing with the Spirit." This was regarded as an attack on the views expressed by Mr. Darby in his pamphlet entitled "The Sealing of the Spirit." In addition, he had also dared to differ from Mr. Darby with regard to "the Unity of a Church in a City." This he described in the case of London as a fiction.

Lord ADELBERT P. CECIL and ALFRED MACE, who had come from England to Canada, took part in the dispute. The former was a gracious and devoted Christian, while the latter was a popular young evangelist. They were both, however, unfitted to help matters. Lord Cecil persistently attacked Mr. Grant. The controversy continued for some time, and led to division. On 4th January, 1885, the Montreal "Exclusive" Assembly by a majority formally excommunicated Frederick W. Grant as a heretic.

Questions of "The New Birth" and "Eternal Life."

How groundless were the charges made against him are seen from the "Narrative of Facts," issued by the Assembly. This docu-

ment asserted that he had taught (1) that the Old Testament saints were "in the Son," and "had eternal life in Him" in virtue of being "born again;" (2) "that when thus born we are at that moment forgiven, justified, no longer in the flesh but in Christ, and dead to sin and the Law;" (3) that this New Birth gives us the full position of the sons of God, and being sons we are sealed with the Holy Ghost, faith in Christ's work not being necessary to sealing; (4) that Romans 7 is the experience of one who is justified in Christ, sealed, seeking to abide in Christ, and to be fruitful and holy; and (5) that souls may have peace and not know it, be justified and not know it, have the Holy Ghost and be in bondage."

The foregoing is, of course, a statement of the charges against F. W. Grant as presented by his accusers, but his friends did not admit its accuracy in all points. While there may be room for criticism as to modes of expression, or for differences in certain points of doctrine, there is surely no ground here for excommunication with its consequent world-wide division. The large majority of the "Exclusive" Assemblies in Canada and the United States adhered to Frederick W. Grant, and so came under the ban.

Shortly after the division had taken place, Lord Cecil was accidentally drowned in Canada. On hearing of his death, F. W. Grant wired to his brother, who was in California: "Dear Cecil is drowned, and with him goes all hope of healing the division."

III. The Reading or Stuart Division.

On 2nd May, 1882, the mortal remains of J. N. Darby were laid to rest in the cemetery at Bournemouth, in the presence of a great concourse of mourners, numbering about 1000. Among those who were present and took part in the services was C. E. Stuart, of Reading, a lifelong friend of Mr. Darby, greatly loved and held in high esteem as a teacher. He read at the graveside Matthew 27. 57-60. He contrasted in a few words the burial of the Master and the burial of the servant. At the burial of the Master hope seemed to be cut off, but how different at the servant's grave, through the death of the Master. In less than three years this gifted teacher and honoured servant of the Lord was excommunicated as a heretic, and again the evil of world-wide division rent the "Exclusive" Assemblies—three times in five years. The heresy he was alleged to teach was said to be found in a tract he published entitled "Christ-

ian Standing and Condition." In the tract he said that "Standing" had to do with our ability to stand before the Throne of God. It was a judicial term, and "a Christian can have no higher standing than to be justified before the Throne of God." A Christian's "condition" or "state" is the new place God has given him in Christ. His old condition was "in Adam;" his new condition is "in Christ."

Foremost among those who charged Mr. Stuart with heresy was J. B. Stoney, himself a teacher of deep piety and outstanding gift. Converted to God as a young man, he had been connected with the Movement for many years. Trained as a barrister, and possessing much of the world's goods, he laid all at the feet of his Lord. He was greatly attracted to Mr. Darby, and held him in high esteem as a teacher. While most teachers among Brethren dealt with the objective side of truth, Mr. Stoney strongly emphasised the subjective or experimental side. He was a mystic, and, like many other mystics down the centuries bearing different names, he lived in the unseen and enjoyed much communion with his ever present Lord. Mr. Stoney passed to be with the Lord in 1897, after being confined to his room by severe illness for nearly two years.

His deep and rich experiences during these months of weakness and prostration breathe out the fragrance of Christ.

Mr. Stoney declared that Mr. Stuart's teaching on

"Christian Standing and Condition"

was unsound—it was a giving up of Christianity and a return to Judaism. "Standing" according to Mr. Stoney was "the removal of the first man from under the eye of God," while "condition" was the Spirit's work forming Christ within.

In Reading, where Mr. Stuart lived, he was greatly loved and held in high esteem by the large Assembly. His great gifts and high Christian character were recognised. The Assembly at Reading carefully examined the charges made against Mr. Stuart, but could find no heresy in his teaching, and exonerated him from all charges made against him. This ought to have been final for all the Assemblies in fellowship, as, according to their own teaching, what was bound on earth was bound in Heaven. Park Street, London, however, took a different view. They took the matter up, and the result was that Mr. Stuart and the Reading Assembly with him were cut off.

In this Reading division *no fundamental doctrine was involved*, yet, in accordance with "Exclusive" principles and practices, each believer in every Assembly in association with Park Street had to decide whether the teaching of Mr. Stoney or the teaching of Mr. Stuart was correct. The babes in Christ, including the young believers of tender years and the recently converted drunkards, had to study the abstruse teachings, and to decide which was truly Scriptural, or, being unable or unwilling to do this, then to follow their leaders.

Shortly after this division Mr. Stuart began to teach strange and novel views on propitiation as one element in atonement. He taught that Christ, not being a Priest on earth, did not finish the work of propitiation till He entered heaven, which He did in a disembodied state before His bodily ascension. This caused much controversy, and estranged many of his sympathisers. Both William Kelly and F. W. Grant intervened in the controversy, opposing, though from different standpoints, this teaching.

IV. **The Bexhill or "Raven" Division.**

In the year 1890 another division was forced on the "Exclusive" Assemblies. Here the

centre of the controversy was the teaching of F. E. RAVEN. Mr. Raven was a mystic of the same subjective school of truth as Mr. Stoney, but even more mystical and much less guarded in his expressions. His expositions and teaching were obscure and difficult to grasp. His teaching appeared to deny to the believers the *present possession of eternal life* which he regarded not as a gift imparted by God when Christ is accepted, but as a sphere of blessing and a condition of the same. He taught that "new birth" was the sovereign act of the Spirit of God, not in consequence of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, but *in order to believe.*

WILLIAM LOWE, Major M'ARTHY and others strenuously opposed Mr. Raven's teaching. They also accused him of teaching heresy regarding the true doctrine of the union of the Divine and human natures in the Lord Jesus Christ, not in a Unitarian sense, but in a Gnostic sense.

F. W. Grant challenged him to say whether he believed "that our Lord had in the humanity He assumed a true human spirit and soul," but Mr. Raven's answer was: "I decline controversy with Mr. Grant."

Later Mr. Raven in referring to the Lord in Incarnation said: "He was not personally

man. He was personally the Logos in human condition." After continuing for many months the controversy led in 1890 to division. At a large meeting held in Greenwich, where Mr. Raven resided, there was open dissension, and when certain who favoured Mr. Raven's teaching came from Greenwich to Bexhill, the Bexhill Assembly refused them fellowship.

Again Park Street took up the matter and gave judgment, clearing Mr. Raven of all charges against him, and cutting off all those who rejected their decision. While the large majority of the "Exclusive" Assemblies followed "Park Street," many of the Assemblies on the Continent, particularly in French-speaking Switzerland, did not. This was due to the fact that the "Brethren" with most influence on the Continent were William Lowe and Major M'Arthy, who were foremost in opposing Mr. Raven's teaching.

V. **The Glanton Division.**

Twelve years later, in 1902, the "Exclusive" Assemblies which had accepted Mr. Raven's teaching, again suffered the evil of division. There, however, was no subtle abstruse doctrine involved. It was simply a difference of view as to the correct procedure to adopt when an Assembly in a place owing to internal

dissension ceased to meet. In the town of Alnwick, in the North of England, the "Exclusive" Assembly had fallen into a low spiritual state. The late Dr. W. T. P. WOLSTON, of Edinburgh, who had intercourse extending over forty years with the believers there, relates in his pamphlet "Hear the Right," that for several years prior to 1905 there had been "a very sad condition of alienation, personal feeling and disorder culminating in two opposite parties" in the Alnwick Meeting. There was open rupture at the meeting on Lord's Day, 1st January, 1905. One of the parties resumed breaking bread in another hall. The other party met for prayer, but did not break bread. On 15th January, 1905, the Glanton Assembly, one of the nearest to Alnwick, wrote to both parties that in the circumstances they could have fellowship with neither. This position was approved by the Northumberland Assemblies and by the three Assemblies in Newcastle. Repeated efforts were made by the Glanton and other Assemblies to effect a reconciliation, and several meetings were held. On 11th February, 1906, the party which had broken bread after the division ceased to do so. During 1905 above a dozen believers came to reside in Alnwick, and went to Glanton

to break bread. A few believers from both parties frequently went to Glanton, but they sat back and did not break bread. This continued till April, 1907, though in the interval there had been further unsuccessful attempts at reconciliation.

In that month a joint meeting of the Glanton and other Assemblies in the district was held to consider the matter and see what could be done. In the judgment of these Assemblies the rupture on 1st January, 1905, resulted in the complete dissolution of the Alnwick Assembly. The meeting prayerfully and anxiously considered what should be their attitude to the believers from both parties in Alnwick, who were now truly repentant and reconciled to each other. In view of the fact that all efforts at healing had been unavailing they judged it to be the Lord's will and for His glory that such repentant believers should one by one be received after careful inquiry by the Glanton or other Assembly to which they applied.

This course at first appeared to commend itself to the Assemblies generally, but it soom became manifest that Park Street, London, thought otherwise. It was alleged that *the elements of a meeting* were still in Alnwick, and that by Glanton's action the Scriptural

principle of "local responsibility" had been infringed. The trouble spread to the Assembly in George Street, Edinburgh. There, on Lord's Day, 21st June, 1908, two believers from the Glanton Assembly presented themselves, and as there was no Scriptural barrier to their being received, they broke bread.

The "Glanton Brethren" and Sympathisers Cut Off.

At a largely attended meeting in Park Street on 18th August, 1908, it was decided that Glanton be refused fellowship, as it had *usurped the rights of Christ in His own House* and transgressed the Divine principle of "local responsibility."

Believers in every "Exclusive" Assembly which had endorsed Mr. Raven's teaching had now to "judge the question:" "Was Glanton's action right or not?" and having judged the question, to take sides accordingly. Life-long Christian fellowships were thus ruthlessly broken. In many cases husband and wife differed, and parent and child, and went separate paths on a Lord's Day morning.

Dr. Wolston in his pamphlet "Hear the Right" points out that before the Glanton rupture there were two parties which might be termed

A "Gospel" Party and a "Church" Party.

He writes: "There has been something wrong within the body corporate and the controversy on Glanton's action is the boil on the surface which shows that the constitution is affected. For several years there has been, as is well known, a divided spirit among those outwardly walking together. On one hand were those whose energies and affections found vent more in the direction of the testimony of the *Gospel* to the unsaved, and fervid desire for their salvation. On the other hand were those before whose minds that which pertained to the *Church*—its privileges, its blessings, its destiny—loomed much more distinctly, while points of ecclesiastical procedure held great sway. Each perhaps thought (though they would scarcely say it), they could do without the other, and in some instances perhaps even desired to be quit of the other. This was utterly wrong, but this state existed."

It goes without saying that Dr. Wolston, zealous preacher of the Gospel, belonged to the former class. It must be very evident that the Holy Spirit which in 1825 and the years that followed led "Brethren" in the path of Unity and brotherly love, was not the spirit which dominated the leaders of the

successive divisions, which dishonoured the Lord, caused unspeakable grief and pain to His saints, and discredited and weakened the testimony.

In the work of the Holy Spirit in 1825 there was speedily manifest the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, and peace, while the various divisions have given clear evidence of the working of the flesh. Writing in 1833, Mr. Darby had penned these weighty words: "You are nothing, nobody but Christians. *The moment you cease to be as an available mount for communion for any consistent Christian you will go to pieces or help the evil.*" Two solemn alternatives are here: "go to pieces" or "help the evil."

Since the inception of the "Bethesda discipline," the "Exclusive" Assemblies had ceased to be "an available mount for communion for any consistent Christian," as witness the cutting off of George Muller, R. C. Chapman, and very many other godly believers. The strong, dominating personality of Mr. Darby held those Assemblies together during the most part of his lifetime, and delayed the fulfilment of the first alternative, yet surely the successive divisions above narrated constitute an abundant fulfilment of his words.

CHAPTER VI

Division in the "Open Assemblies"

The Needed Truth Division and Sub-Division.

WHAT has been written dealing with the period since the cleavage in 1848 has been for the most part a history of "Exclusive" Brethren and of their various divisions. After 1848, the "Open" Brethren continued, maintaining their early principles of gathering and of receiving *all believers who were not Scripturally debarred from fellowship.* They gave themselves wholeheartedly to the preaching of the Gospel, so that each Assembly became a light- and life-giving centre for all around, while the foreign field was not neglected. There were many who followed in the steps of Anthony Norris Groves.

Dr. DUFF, the pioneer missionary to India, truly declared that the Church that ceases to be evangelistic will soon cease to be evangelical. The "Open" Assemblies were pre-

served from this danger. The continuous presentation of the worth and atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel has kept them loyal to the Foundations of the Faith. No doctrinal differences divided their ranks, as in the case of their "Exclusive" Brethren. Any differences which did arise were rather of a personal character, and, as "Open" Brethren held that each Assembly was responsible to the Lord alone for its order and discipline, such cases were localised and not made the occasion for world-wide division.

While the early Scriptural lines of gathering were maintained generally amongst "Open" Brethren, what has been called a tightening process began to manifest itself about 1875. This was caused by teaching akin to "Exclusivism" finding its way into the Assemblies.

J. R. CALDWELL, one of the best known teachers amongst "Open" Brethren, in a booklet entitled "The Gathering and Receiving of the Children of God," thus writes of this leavening process: "In the year 1876, in the month of April, certain questions appeared in a periodical then called *The Northern Witness*. These questions were answered seriatim in the next month's issue by the one who asked them. The questions were framed with much skill, and were replied to with much plausi-

bility." This was the beginning of a new departure akin to the "Exclusivism" of J. N. Darby, but conducted on other lines, supported by a different set of arguments, and backed up by reference to different passages of Scripture. This teaching bore the same fruit among "Open" Brethren as among "Exclusive" Brethren. The questions were drawn up by J. A. BOSWELL, an able minister of the Word, who along with Chas. Morton, Geo. Geddes, A. P. Macdonald, and others, took the lead, and brought about in 1889 what is known as the "Needed Truth" division. These new "Exclusive" views were plausibly and persistently propagated in a periodical called *Needed Truth*, which gave the title to the disruption. They emphasised the distinction between "the Church," which is the Body of Christ, composed of all believers, and "the Church of God" as "the Fellowship" (Acts 2. 42). The House of God, the Assembly of the Living God, made up, as they asserted, only of believers who were in the confederacy or circle of Assemblies which accepted "Needed Truth" doctrine. These doctrines were more rigidly sectarian than "Exclusivism." No believer, however godly, if he had not submitted to believers' baptism, was admitted to their fellowship, while absolute separation

from all denominations was demanded. They arrogated to their Assemblies *the sole right to be called the "Churches of God."* All Christians outside their Assemblies were by them declared to be outside the "Churches of God." The confederation of their Assemblies constituted "The Fellowship, the Assembly of God on earth."

That they highly esteemed themselves may be gathered from the words of HENRY ELSON, one of their leaders, in a pamphlet published in 1904. He refers to the "Needed Truth" Assemblies as *"an expression of the Kingdom of God on earth (in however small a remnant) that is in advance of anything known for centuries."*

It is very manifest that the path which the Holy Spirit marked out for the feet of the Saints in 1825 is very different from the sectarian path trodden by the "Needed Truth" Brethren in 1889. There appears to be a striking likeness between the doctrines of the "Needed Truth" Leaders and the doctrines of the strict Baptists in Stuttgart whom, in 1843, Mr. Muller, in his gracious way, sought to lead into more Scriptural paths, and to deliver from the "undue stress" which they laid on "believers' baptism" and "separation from State Churches."

In contrast to "Exclusive" Brethren, the "Needed Truth" leaders laid great stress on the Elderhood. They had different grades of Elders: (1) Elders of Israel, with an "oversight that was national and comprehensive;" (2) "Elders of the Assembly, whose oversight was congregational;" and (3) "Elders of the City, whose concern was local." They regarded an organised elderhood as the panacea for all Assembly difficulties. What the "Central Meeting" was to the "Exclusive" Assemblies, the "International Oversight" was to the "Needed Truth" Meetings. Both failed, however, to prevent disruption, but rather occasioned it.

In 1903 one of the "Needed Truth" Assemblies in Scotland had occasion to discipline an Elder in the Assembly. While the Scottish overseers thought this proper and competent, the "overseers in England, Wales, and Ireland" thought otherwise. The particular case of discipline was ultimately settled, apparently to the satisfaction of all concerned. Questions, however, as to the correct procedure to be followed in the case of the discipline of any elder in the future continued to be debated. Should such discipline be carried out by the local Assembly as represented by the Local Oversight, or by the County

Oversight or District Oversight? A meeting of the Elders of Great Britain was held in January, 1904, and at this meeting the Scottish Overseers were challenged to come to an issue there and then with the words, "Now's the day and now's the hour." It was evident at this meeting that the Scottish Overseers were at variance with the others. The controversy continued till May, 1904, when there was open rupture resulting in two distinct groups of "Needed Truth" Assemblies, each claiming to be "The Fellowship," the "Vernal" party being mostly in Scotland, and the "Luxmore" party mostly in England, with odd Assemblies in both lands, and one or two abroad.

On 24th May, 1904, Dr. LUXMORE, a leader in the South, and four others on behalf of the Overseers of England, Wales, and Ireland, sent letters to the Overseers in the four counties of Ayrshire, Dumbartonshire, Lanarkshire, and Stirlingshire, calling upon the Overseers to "disband" themselves. The letter reads: "We now write with deep pain, and we trust a becoming sense of responsibility to God and to our fellows to inform you that you *can no longer be recognised by those from whom we come as the Divinely constituted circle of overseers in ——shire,* and we now call upon you to disband yourselves."

Scripture warrant for such a letter would be difficult to find. Mr. Elson, in the pamphlet already quoted, justifies it on the ground of "progress in Divine things," and adds: "It should be remembered that we left the 'Open' connection upon the avowed principle of progress."

It is on the same ground of progress that the Church of Rome justifies her hierarchal system.

In his "History," the remarks of Mr. Neatby regarding the "Needed Truth" Movement are brief but very pointed. He writes: "This party (*i.e.*, 'Open' Brethren) has, I believe, gained greatly in strength of late years, by the force of the reaction against an extremely fanatical movement known by the name of 'Needed Truth'—a designation taken from the title of its organ. It aimed at imposing a narrower and more exclusive practice than had ever prevailed in any section of the 'Brethren' whatsoever. Happily, after some prospect of considerable success, it was generally rejected. It exemplified the operation of bigoted principles in so unamiable a light that it did much good, as a warning to the 'Open' Brethren."

It is to be regretted, however, that there are still some in need of warning, and it is

the prayerful desire of the writer that what has been narrated in these pages may indeed prove a warning to such.

Strange as it may seem, the *natural* heart, even of the true Christian, ever has the tendency to exclude his brother from privileges embraced in the great heart of the Head of the Church. "Large-heartedness" in its true sense is a spiritual plant, which ever needs cultivating (Eph. 3. 17-19).

CHAPTER VII

Conclusion

"Then had the churches rest, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."—Acts 9. 31.

THAT the gracious testimony begun by the Holy Spirit of God in 1825, and which gave promise of much glory to God and blessing to His people, has been grievously marred by human failure surely no one will deny. With this before him, F. W. GRANT writes: "That the Hand of God is upon us is but too evident. Our shame is public. It requires no spirituality to see that exactly in that which we have professedly sought we have failed most signally. The Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace is just *most surely what we have not kept.*"

What, then, is the Divine remedy for the evil? What is the will of God for those of His Saints who mourn and deplore the dishonour which past divisions and strife have brought both upon God and His people. The remedy surely does not lie in the uniting or

amalgamating of existing circles or confederacies of Assemblies. Such confederacies are, as Mr. Darby clearly showed in 1828, alike unscriptural and undesirable. The Church of God is not composed of a confederation of local Assemblies, but of members of the Body of Christ. The only membership which the New Testament knows is the membership of that Body.

F. W. Grant, in the letter already quoted in this chapter, asks: "Is there, then, left no plain path in which the feet even of the lame may not be turned out of the way—may even be healed? At one time, as we all knew, we had something easily defined and easily maintainable by Scripture—carrying true consciences not perplexing them. Have we suffered this to be taken from us? Could we have lost it without being ourselves in some way guilty for the loss? Was it not while we slept we lost it? Assuredly the way of the Lord is still and ever a way not needing great intellect or attainments for its discovery, but a way in which the wayfaring man though a fool should not err. Would it be like our God if it were otherwise?"

The Scriptural remedy, then, for repairing the breaches in the Testimony and for again bringing glory to our God and blessing to His

people with consequent blessing to an unsaved world which needs God's salvation is *a return to the Scriptural principles and the Catholic fellowship of the believers in Dublin and elsewhere in the early years of the Movement.* Even more so now than then is there the need for such a Testimony. There are very many godly believers in the various denominations who grieve over the "Modernist" teaching in many pulpits. The divisions and strife among Brethren repel such, but were the Assemblies of God's People truly to be, in Mr. Darby's language, "an available mount of communion for any consistent Christian," they would be attracted to the Assemblies, and find in them a haven of rest.

It is most interesting to read how the Spirit of God, almost two hundred years ago, that is, nearly one hundred years before Believers began to meet in a Scriptural fashion in Dublin and elsewhere, taught the members of the Relief Church—a small dissenting Presbyterian Church in Scotland—the truth of *the unity of all true believers*, and gave them grace to welcome to their communion all such. The following is culled from the Standards of that denomination: "On the subject of communion, it is of importance to inquire Whose table the sacramental table is? This is a question so

plain that a child of eight years old could answer it, and yet its import is unknown to thousands arrived at the state of manhood. *It is mean, unworthy prostitution of this Table to call it the table of a party.* It is the Lord's Table. For whom is the Table covered by the generous Entertainer? Is it covered for Burgher or Anti-burgher? for Church people or Relief people? for Independents or Episcopalians as such? No. For whom then? *For the children of God, not as they belong to any particular denomination of professors, but as they are His children in reality and appear to be so by their deportment.* It is the most daring presumption in any to deny the children's bread to the children of God."

Some of the denominational names may be strangely unfamiliar to many readers, but the truth regarding the fellowship of saints is the same as that which the Holy Spirit taught Dr. Cronin and those associated with him.

The text Acts 9. 31 at the beginning of this chapter gives much for the encouragement and guidance of God's people in these difficult days. The Churches had "rest;" were "edified" and "walking" were "multiplied." The "rest" which the Churches in Acts 9 enjoyed was doubtless under the providence of God

attributable in some measure to the conversion of the persecuting Saul of Tarsus, and also to the fact that the Jews were themselves persecuted by Caligula, the insane Roman emperor who insisted on Divine honours being paid to him, and who set up his image in the Temple at Jerusalem.

What the Assemblies of God's People need to-day is "*rest,*" not so much from foes and opposition outside, but from all within that would grieve the Holy Spirit of God. "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (Exodus 33. 14). The Assemblies need to be edified—built up on their most holy faith. Much that has passed for truth in the past is not the Truth of God. Knowledge puffeth up, love buildeth up. The Assemblies need *shepherding*. Careful watch should be kept against the beginnings of divisive teaching such as marred the "Exclusive" and "Needed Truth" Assemblies. The exhortation is, "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5. 1). The price of liberty is eternal vigilance. The Assemblies should be *active*, walking in the fear of the Lord, and surely that activity will find expression in an aggressive evangelism. God has committed the ministry

of reconciliation not to unfallen angels, but to men—to sinners saved by His grace.

Dr. THOMAS GUTHRIE, a preacher of a past generation, had exalted views of the dignity and honour conferred on the preacher of the Gospel in being a labourer with God in the saving of souls. He speaks of the pleasures of soul-winning "as the sweetest out of Heaven, which Kings cannot purchase and yet beggars may enjoy." Speaking of Moses lifting up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, he says: "Nobler still his attitude and office who with his foot on this dying world lifts up the Cross—'Jesus Christ and Him crucified.' Give me the bleeding Saviour, make me the instrument of converting a single soul, and I grudge not Moses 'his piece of brass,' nor envy him the honour of saving a thousand lives that are now all quenched in death."

Again, in contrasting the preacher of the Gospel with David's mighty men who risked their lives to draw the water of Bethlehem for their king, he declares: "Yet rather than be one of David's mighty men, it would content me to be one of Christ's humblest, and hold the cup of Life to a pauper's lips."

This blessed privilege of soul-winning is not confined to the evangelist only, but every saint of God should take a living and loving

interest in the unsaved around them, and pray and labour for their salvation.

So shall the Assemblies of God's People be multiplied. We read in Acts 2. 47 (R.V.) "The Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved." The Holy Spirit is the Divine Gatherer, but alas! during the past century how often has "the wolf scattered the flock?"

May our God in His infinite mercy grant, in the coming days or years of testimony that may remain for His Church, that the Assemblies of His people may be kept in lowly grace with love to all the Saints, endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace.

"To the only wise God our Saviour be glory . . . both now and ever. AMEN."

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